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GREAT SAGAS : UNFORGETTABLE CELLULOID SERIES-1

the eternal saga of love

Devdas

edited & compiled by : ***rahul singhal***
a concerted effort : ***xact***

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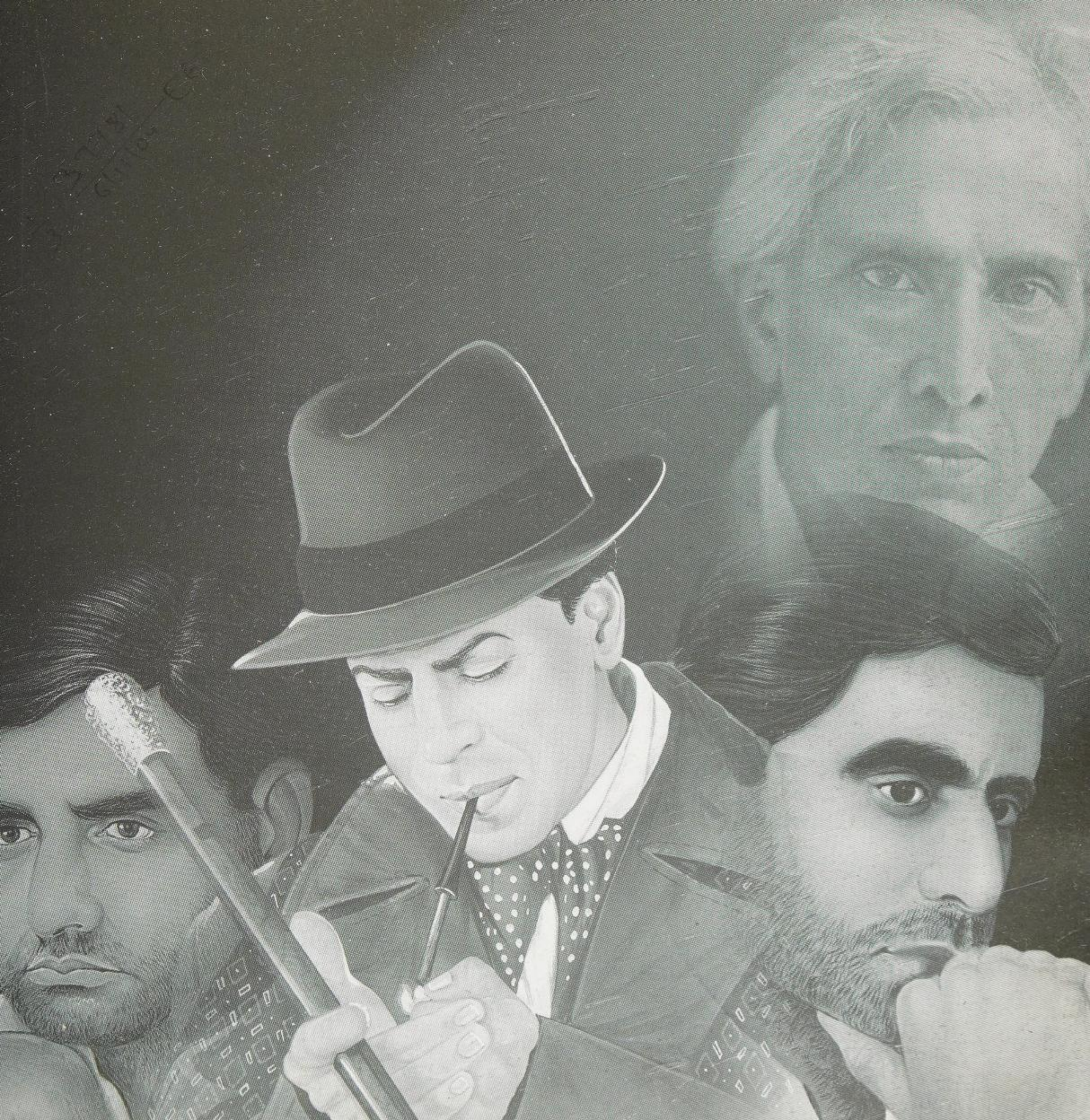

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The Eternal Saga of Love : Devdas

Compiled & Edited by :

rahul singhal

a concerted effort by :

xact ad 'n' art studio

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From the Editor

The Eternal Saga of Love : Devdas is a poignant tale of doomed love. A story which is both classic and timeless, and has inspired such filmmakers like the legendary Bimal Roy to convert the novel into a celluloid Saga.

As is the case with all classics, they are not bound by considerations of age and time. Thus a novel written in 1917, has been re-filmed nearly a century later in the year 2002, and has been enthusiastically viewed and appreciated universally. The Devdas of K.L. Saigal and then Dilip Kumar, has now been re-incarnated in the Shahrukh Khan of Sanjay Leela Bhansali's film.

The book is a comparative study of the various versions of Devdas that have been filmed in Bollywood till date.

The unique features of each, and the performances of the lead stars, like the legendary K.L. Saigal, Dilip Kumar or the present Megastar Shahrukh Khan, apart from actresses like Vyjayanthimala, Suchitra Sen, Madhuri and Aishwarya has been discussed in details.

Colour photographs and caricatures included in the book, add to the visual appeal and multi dimensionality of the book.

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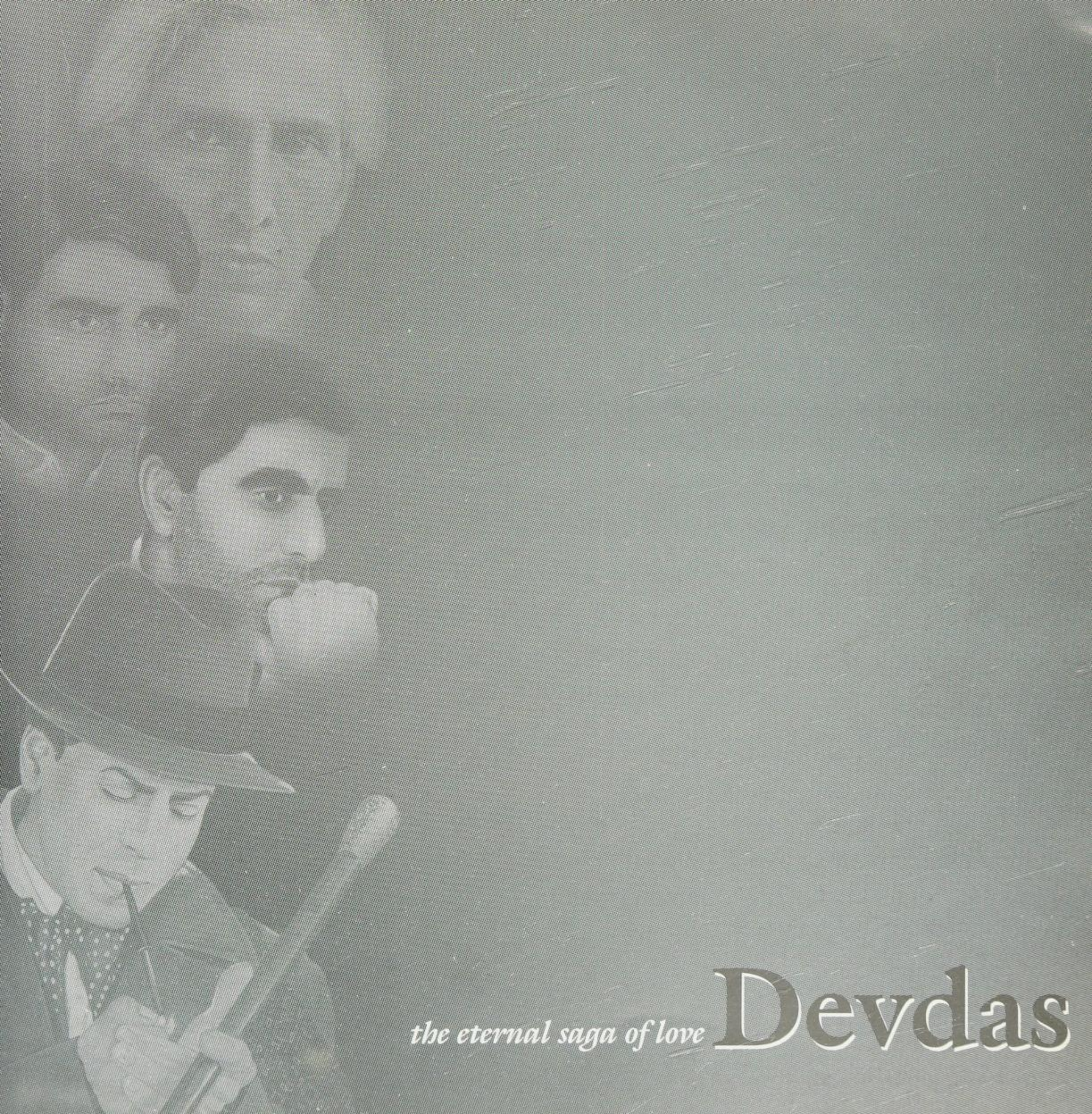
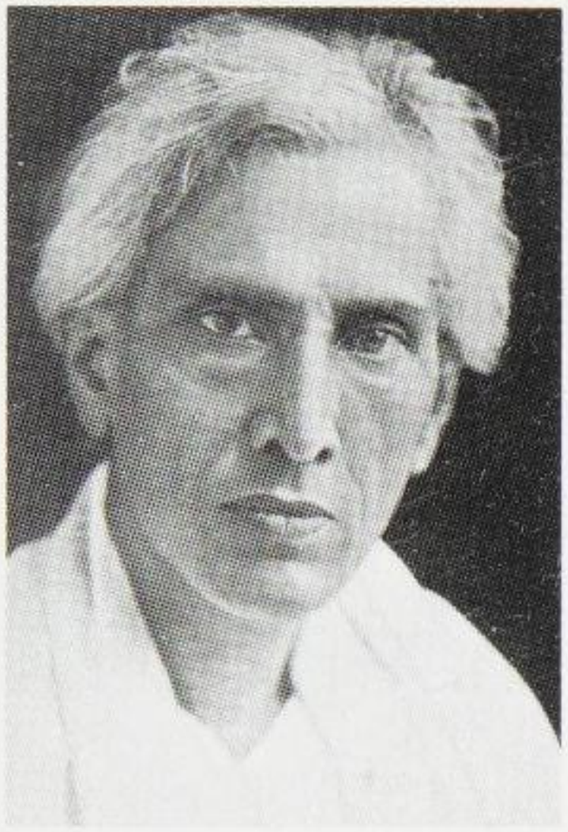


the eternal saga of love **Devdas**

Sarat Chandra Chattopadhay



Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay (1876-1938)

Shri Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay was born on the 15th of September,1876, in the village Devanapurand in the Hoogly district of West Bengal. Born to a poor family, Sarat Chandra was the second born amongst five siblings- three sons and two daughters. His father Matilal was a wanderer by nature, and failed to hold a job for a long time. He wrote stories and novels which inevitably he couldn't complete due to his restless nature. The financial crisis which Sarat's family faced due to Motilal's joblessness, forced Matial to stay in his father-in-laws house for a long period. Hence, the greater part of Sarat's childhood was spend in his grandparents, house in Bhagalpur.

Even after Matilal, on obtaining a job at Dihiri, Bihar, took his family with him to his workplace. Sarat remained in Bhagalpur for pursuing his studies. Sarat Chandra had always been a meritorious student, and had received many scholarships. In the year 1888, he was granted a double promotion due to his exceptional performance in the school excamination. In 1892, after his father had lost his job and had returned to Debanandpur. Sarat had to abandon his studies due to his father's failing

to arrange for his school fees.

During that period, at the age of 17, Sarat Chandra wrote his first novel "Kashinath".

During the following years Sarat's family had to face great financial hardships. Sarat too, continued with his studies.

After his father's death, Sarat Chandra came to Calcutta to try his luck. There he took up a job of translating Hindi paper books to English, for a salary of Rs. 30. In January 1903 he went to Rangoon (Burma) and obtained a temporary job in an Audit office. Later he got a job in Burma's Public Works Account office.

During his stay in Rangoon, he resided at the Botating Pozendong area of Rangoon. There in a lower floor of his building, Chakravorty Upadhikari who was a carpenter by profession, stayed with his daughter Shanti. When this man fixed his very young daughter's marriage with an aged man, who was also known to be a drunkard, Shanti requested Sarat Chandra to save her from such a calamity. Sarat, to save her, married her himself. They led a very happy and contented life, and were blessed with a son. Then, when their son was a year old, Rangoon was hit by plague and Sarat lost both his wife and son to it. Sarat was devastated by his wife's and son's death.

Sarat Chandra's house at Kolkata

Sarat's house at Debanandpur

Much later, he married for the second time, consenting to the request of his wife-to-be's father, who was a good acquaintance of his. His second wife Hiranmayee Devi, remained childless. She was illiterate at the time of her marriage, Sarat later taught her to read and write. Hiranmayee Devi was quiet, religious and caring wife, and Sarat led a happy and peaceful life with her.

His career as a novelist took off in Rangoon, where he penned novels like 'Boro Didi', 'Biraj Bou', 'Parinita', 'Pandit moshai', etc. Rabindranath Tagore, after reading these early writings, pronounced him to be a talented writer.

During 1916, Sarat Chandra was afflicted with an incurable illness(swelling of feet) and returned to Calcutta. There he took up residence in Shibpur, Howrah. During his residence there, he wrote most of his famous novels. Thus this period could be termed as the golden period of his literary life.

Sarat's house at Panitras

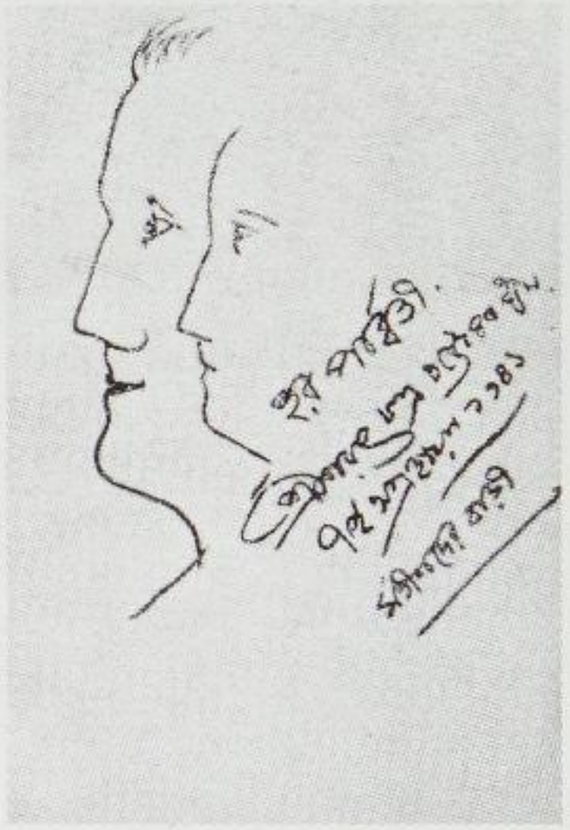
1921 saw the beginning of the Non-Aligned Movement. Sarat Chandra at the beckoning of Deshbandhu, joined Congress. From the year 1921 till 1936, he remained the chairman of the Howrah District Congress. From the year 1921 till the year 1936 , he remained the Chairman of the district for 16 continuous

years. In the year 1936, he remained the Chairman of the Howrah District Congress. Dhaka Visvavidyalaya awarded Sarat Chandra the degree of D. Lit. Sarat Chandra was not only a novelist, but a singer, instrumentalist, actor and had an aptitude for medicine. Apart from these, he was also a very kind and considerate person, who had a great compassion for the plight of women in the rigiditly male dominated society of that time. A fact that becomes apparent in all his writings.

The last years of Sarat Chandra's life saw him suffering from one illness or the other. When he was admitted to the Park Nursing home for an operation, Rabindranath Tagore sent him a letter wishing for his speedy recovery.

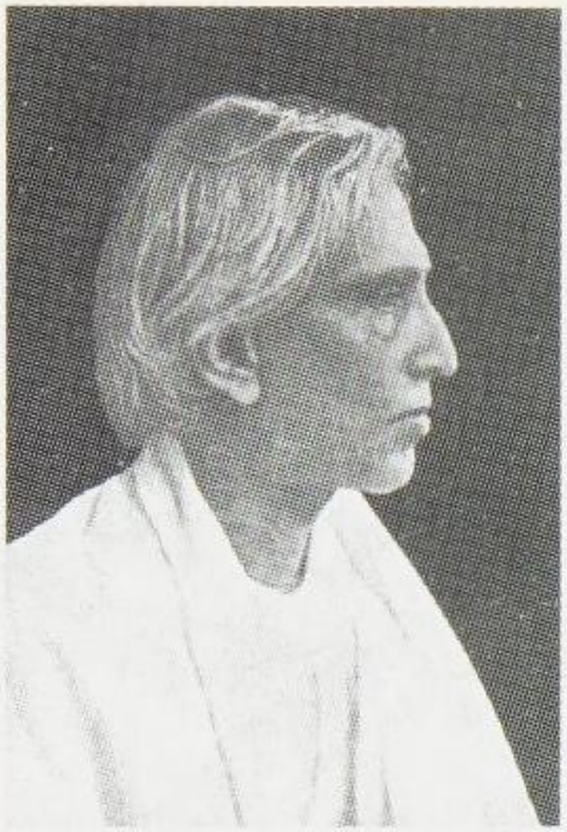
Sarat Chandra was operated on 12th January, 1938. On the 16th of January,1938 he breathed his last.

On learning about Sarat Chandra's death, Rabindranath Tagore told a United Press correspondent: - *"A man who presented the intrinsic joys and sorrows of bengali life in an extremely sympathetic and touching way, at the passing away of such a beloved writer of the modern times, I share the pain of my countrymen."*



Sketch depicting "Har-Parvati" made by Sarat Chandra.

The Original Story



The story is set in the early twentieth century Bengal.

It begins with the childhood friendship of the neighbours - Paro and Devdas, and the beautiful bond they share. It often happens that young Devdas, as is typical of young lads, beats up his docile companion Paro, on some pretext or the other. But Paro, though hurt and angry, keeps mum about the inflictor of her injuries in front of her mother and grandmother, often laying the blame on the poor 'mastermoshai' (teacher) of the 'Pathshala' she goes to, in order to escape further studying. Soon Paro and Devdas create reconciliation and their frolics and games continue.

This continues till Devdas is sent to Calcutta city for further studies. Paro is extremely crestfallen on hearing this, but Devdas consoles her saying that he will be back soon.

The smooth sailing of the characters' life is disrupted from this stage onwards.

When Devdas returns from Calcutta the reader is made aware of the nature of Paro's feelings towards him. After her marriage is fixed with a widower Zamindar,

Bhuvan Choudhury, Paro reveals to Manorama, that no matter to whom her parents decide to marry her off, she considers Devdas as her husband. When a shocked and incredulous Manorama declares that Paro won't dare to reveal her feelings to Devdas, Paro makes up her mind to do exactly the same thing.She tells Manorama, who is already married , that it is in vain that she applies 'Sindoor' on her forehead, because she does not even realize what is the true meaning of a husband, if she can't even think about revealing to her husband her own thoughts and feelings.

With her mind made up, Paro visits Devdas, in the dead of night. Devdas is scandalized. He remonstrates with Paro, asking her whether she realizes the consequence of her action. Paro replies that her humiliation does not bother her. She just wants to know ,whether Devdas will marry her. Devdas reminds her, that his parents are against this match. Then they both turn silent and Devdas tells her that he will accompany her home.

On his raising the issue of his marriage with Paro, Devdas's father absolutely rebuffs him. Miffed, Devdas leaves for Calcutta. From there he sends Paro a letter, telling her that their marriage wasn't possible and that her being from a relatively low status family, and a family who accepted bride price at that, was a big hindrance in the path

of their marriage. He then goes on to tell her that he himself had never felt any love for her and had thus never seen their relationship in such a light.

Reading this missive, Paro is hurt and humiliated. She decides to bow to her parents' wishes and get married to the person chosen by them.

From this stage the character of Paro becomes comparatively passive in this novel. Meanwhile, Devdas at Calcutta, had been experiencing conflicting feelings. He realizes that he loved Paro and it was difficult for him to imagine a life without her. He repents his rash letter and rushes back to his village to undo any mistake he had committed. There he meets Paro at the river where she comes to fetch water. He tells Paro that he has come back at her beckoning. But Paro refuses to acknowledge him at all. She tells him not to mention whatever she asked him that day, because she herself didn't want to remember it.

Paro doesn't soften even on Devdas' apologizing for his harsh letter.

She tells him that she has lost all her faith in him. And that the person she is about to marry is both wealthy rich and trustworthy. He is religious too, and is not as fickle minded as Devdas, and that her parents would never allow her to be married to a person like Devdas.

A stunned Devdas exclaims that he wants to know what causes Paro to be so vain about herself. Paro replies, that she has as much reason to be vain , as he has. If Devdas is good looking, so is she. But while Devdas is devoid of good qualities, Paro has no dearth of them. And in a few days, Paro too will in no way be socially or financially inferior to Devdas. She goes on to say that she knows that he, Devdas, can ruin her reputation by revealing her secret visit to Devdas' room in the midst of night.

More than anything else, Paro's this last taunt, touches Devdas to the core. He becomes furious. In his anger, he strikes Paro with his cane across her forehead, saying, as she is extremely vain about her beauty, let him put some mark to diminish it, just like the moon has scars on its face, which mars its perfection.

Devdas breaks his cane into pieces and then tears and ties his shirt around the tearful Paro's forehead, and then consoles her saying, that as he had always punished her for her naughtiness in the past, she should take her present punishment too in that spirit and blesses her wishing for a happy and peaceful life for her.

When Paro's mother, horrified at her scarred and bleeding forehead, asks her the cause of it, she replies that she slipped and fell on the river bank and consequently cut

herself.

After eight to ten days, Paro is married off to Zamindar Bhuvan Choudhury while Devdas goes back to his old mess at Calcutta, to his buddy Chunilal, who is a drunkard and a regular visitor to the '*Kothas*'. He takes the distraught Devdas to Chandramukhi's Kotha, where Devdas's first words on beholding the dazzlingly beautiful tawaif are "how ugly and how vulgar!' The otherwise vocal Chandramukhi is dumbfounded; not having had had anyone berate her so disgustingly amongst her plethora of admirers.

The next missive of Devdas was "Do you take money?"

After recovering from her initial dumb foundedness Chandramukhi replies that "Yes, in order to survive, we have to accept money from people." At this Devdas puts a currency note in Chandramukhi's hand without even glancing at what he has given and hurries away from the Kotha.

Surprised and dazed Chandramukhi enquires about Devdas from Chunilal, and requests him to bring him one more time to her, revealing to Chunilal, and at the same time to the readers as well, that she had developed a soft corner for the seemingly eccentric Devdas in such a

short time.

Meanwhile, Paro enters the palatial house of her husband Bhuvan Choudhury, who is a big Zamindar. But even then, there is a dearth of people in such a huge house. A handsome 20 years old youth comes and pays his regards to Paro, introducing himself as her eldest son Mahendra. Paro, blesses him and asks him about her other children-another son and a daughter-Bhuvan's children from his earlier marriage.

This point in the novel, is very relevant to understanding the character of Paro. She shows a maturity which belies her age. The various trials and tribulations she goes through, makes her more mature than is befitting her age. Moreover, Paro had never been a person to let shyness hinder her.

In reply to Paro's question, Mahendra says that his younger brother will come as soon as his exams are over, and his younger sister Yashoda, who is at her in-laws place, could not manage to come.

Paro guesses correctly that Yashoda's inability to come to her father's house was due to her anger at his second marriage.

Paro's meeting with her husband Bhuvan Choudhury, rarely used to take place. During one such rare

occasion, the reader is made aware,that the aged Bhuvan (he is forty plus), feels remorse on having married the very young and beautiful Paro.

He reveals that after his wife died and Yashoda got married there was no one to look after the entire family and Mahendra had refused to marry.It was only due to this problem, that he had consented to this marriage. Otherwise, he felt, being his wife did not suit the young and charming Paro.

When Mahendra brings home the angry Yashoda from her in-laws place, Paro adorns her with all her own fine jewelleries, saying that Yashoda should consider Paro to be just one amongst the numerous servants in the house, and therefore she should not get so angry with a mere maid. Yashoda is overwhelmed by Paro's repartee and genuine affection. She forgets about all her grievances and tells her father of her decision of staying in his house for at least two months. An overjoyed and emotional Bhuvan Choudhury blesses Paro and tells her she has saved him from much heart-ache and self humiliation.

Bhuvan's youngest son, Binodlal, after returning home, does not even agree to go to Calcutta for further studies. Such was the hold of Paro on her step-children. Meanwhile, Devdas wanders about in the streets of

Calcutta, aimlessly, half like a lunatic.

Then he asks Chunilal, does he go to Chandramukhi's Kotha. Then he agrees to accompany Chunilal to her place.

The readers next see a transformed Devdas, who has now turned into a drunkard. Chandramukhi, sitting despondently nearby, requests him not to drink so much of alcohol. She has by now, fallen hopelessly in love with Devdas, and feels helpless on having to see Devdas in this condition. He still despises Chandramukhi, but cannot help coming to her Kotha and drowning himself in alcohol.

After the sudden death of Devdas's father, Devdas returns to his village, for the cremation. His changed appearance and demeanour surprise and shock all, including Paro, who comes to share Devdas's sorrows. She learns about his drunkenness and visits to Chandramukhi's kotha, from Dharamdas and decides to confront Devdas and extract promise of never again touching alcohol.

It can be mentioned here, that Devdas and Paro come face to face after three long years, at Devdas's fathers' funeral. When Paro goes to Devdas's room, to confront him, they exchange formal pep-talk about mutual

well being. When Devdas fathoms how hurt Paro feels when he alludes to her past behaviour, he tries to console her saying such things should be forgotton and forgiven. When Paro tearfully begs and requests him to give up alcohol and expresses her desire of taking him along with her to her husband's house, in order to be able to look after him, Devdas refuses, saying such a thing is impossible. Paro protests saying if we wish it, nothing is impossible. Devdas asks her whether it is possible for her to run away with him that very night. Rendered speechless, Paro is forced to leave matters as they were. But before leaving, she gets a promise from Devdas ,that he will one day visit her at her husband's house, and that he will remember his promise even before his death.

Devdas leaves Talsonapur village after six months of his father's death, tormented by the mundaneness of life, the haunting memories of Parvati and the tyrannies of his brother and sister-in-law. He takes his mother to Kashi and returns to Calcutta. There he finds out that Chunilal had changed his dwellings and is untraceable. Then he goes to Chandramukhi's *Kotha*, where at first he fails to recognize and then is surprised beyond words at her transformation. Gone is the grandeur of the house and the glamour and sheen of Chandramukhi. Instead he sees a

shabby and woefully vacant house, with a emaciated looking Chandramukhi in simple garbs, bereft of all her costly jewellery and gorgeous costumes.

This point of the story is very important as it serves to demonstrate the bond that grows between Chandramukhi and Devdas, and the subtle and undefinable relationship,that is established between them. She tells him, how his rebukes had made her hate and finally relinquish her occupation and all the fineries that were attached with such a profession. Her love and absolute devotion to Devdas comes out through this chapter. Devdas asks her how will she earn her livelihood now that she had left her work of a 'tawaif'. She says, that she will move to some place cheaper than Calcutta, and her earnings from her jewelleries and other household materials that she had sold, would sustain her. Devdas realizes that it was just in the hope of another glimpse of his, that Chandramukhi had stayed in Calcutta. He is overwhelmed and falls silent. She reveals how she had eloped with the man she had whole heartedly loved, and with whom she had parted ways just over some minor bickerings over jewellery. Now, she says, she has realized it is possible to even sacrifice her life for the person whom she has come to love. Eventually, as Devdas leaves, she

prays to God that he allow her to meet Devdas at least one more time.

Meanwhile, Parvati gets Mahendra married and adjusts her life style according to the likings of her family, including the new bride, often sacrificing silently whatever little indulgences she may have allowed herself. Her life turns completely passive, without any dreams or hopes for the future. Leading a goalless life, she just has some long lost memories of her childhood days with Devdas. Her only solace are the letters she exchanges with her childhood friend Manorama. It is through these letters that she comes to know about Devdas's excessive drinking and nearly total ruin. Reading about this, she immediately asks Mahendra to order a *palki*, and come along with her to Talsonapur. But on arriving she finds that Devdas had already left.

Chandramukhi, had left Calcutta and taken up dwellings, or rather had a small cottage, in Ashathjhuri village. When she learns about Devdas' deteriorating condition, from his sisiter-in-law, she leaves for Calcutta, and accidently discovers him lying in an inabriated condition. Chandramukhi takes him to her house. On awakening, Devdas is surprised to find himself near Chandramukhi, and says that he, even in his unconscious

state had recognized the caring and loving hands of Chandramukhi that had taken care of him. Chandramukhi is touched and overwhelmed at these first kind and loving words of her beloved.

Chandramukhi nurses the seriously ill Devdas, whose addiction to alcohol had damaged his liver, more than for a month. Gradually he recovers. One day he tells Chandramukhi that her name sounds too long, so he will now onwards call her *bou* (wife). She laughs at this and asks him why does he want to do so? Devdas tells her that he will never divulge the reason to her. Then, suddenly he asks her why does she take so much care of him. When Chandramukhi remains speechless, he further goes on to say, that there is such a vast difference between Paro and Chandramukhi. She is intolerant, while Chandramukhi is the epitome of tolerance. Everyone loves Paro, but nobody loves Chandramukhi. Then he confesses that he does love Chandramukhi. And if there is some sort of existence after death, he wouldn't be able to stay away from Chandramukhi at such a place.

An overwhelmed Chandramukhi is speechless, and with tears streaking down her face, prays to God for the fulfillment of this one wish of her's. A year passes, Devdas's condition has deteriorated once again. He remembers his

mother, Paro, Chandramukhi… all of whom are very dear to him, who love him immensely, but all of whom are away from him. He ralises that his end has come near, and remembers the promise he had given to Paro. He starts for her husband's house. En-route, his condition becomes worse off. Chandramukhi voluntarily leads the life of a recluse, away from the archlights which were once a part of her daily existence and he is laid beneath a tree in Paro's village, where he dies. Paro hears about an unknown man who underneath a tree, nearby her house and later learns from Mahindra that it was some Devdas Mukherjee from Talsonapur village.

Hearing this she frantically runs towards the place where Devdas's body had been laid, but is stopped midway by her husband and son, who think that she has lost her senses or is sick.

Devdas's body remains untouched, uncreamated, as no one is willing to touch a person's body who, though a Brahmin, was a stranger, an unidentified person. The body of the once beautiful charming Devdas and the beloved of Paro and Chandramukhi, lied forsaken in the fields, until crows and vultures feasted on his body and thus ended the tragic Saga of doomed love.

"It was the role of a lifetime, it gave me tremendous scope. And I was geared up to portray it to the best of my ability. I poured my heart and soul into Chandramukhi."

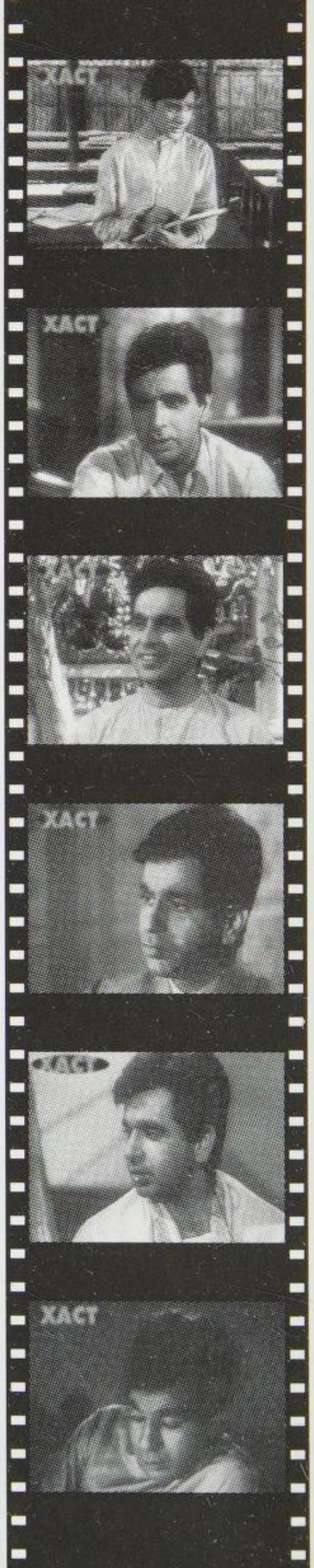
- Vyjayanthimala

Sarat Chandra's Devdas

Within sixteen chapters the famous novelist Sarat Chandra Chatterjee wrote the ever appealing romantic tragedy Devdas, that is still read with the same interest and care as it was in the twentieth century. The name of Devdas conjures up the vision of a heart-broken doomed lover sinking in the ocean of pain and alcohol in order to escape the memories of his doomed love. His painful death in a lonely miserable night is unforgettable and full of sorrow.

The novelist has drawn his character with much perfection and skill. From the beginning of the novel he was shown as a naughty child who did all kinds of mischief accompanied by Paro (Parboti). Paro the one and only playmate of Devdas was just like his shadow. She was also a naughty child playing the whole day and obeyed whatever Devdas ordered to her. His indifference towards studies compelled his parents to send him to Calcutta to make him well educated and polished. From this moment the adolescence period was over and the matured love for Paro grew in the mind of Devdas. After his transformation into a typical Kolkata Babu, Devdas came back at Talsonapur village with the knowledge of politics, cinema and economics. There time Devdas comes across Paro who was

praying before God. This moment was so replete with subtle nuances that both of them were silent and unmoved. But their depth of love and emotion went against the norms of the conservative society. The society spoke of status, class, position and money. As the outcome of such a clash, the possibility of marriage between Paro and Devdas vanished forever and detached the two lovers. Though fate separated them, their souls were united forever. Devdas could not accept the blow of fate and became an alcoholic and a reckless man with a lost spirit. Chandramukhi-a courtesan girl entered his life and tried to console his wounded soul with her loving touch. Devdas could not accept this woman in his life, neither he forget Paro for a single moment. Gradually his condition deteriorated by constant mental pressure and torture. His health was in a bad state and liquor had completely damaged his lever. At that last stage too when he suffered from the physical pain as well as mental agony, he never called Chandramukhi or Paro to serve him. The footsteps of death could be heard by Devdas and recalled the promise once given to Paro. He decided to go to Hathipota village to see his beloved Paro for the last time and to keep his promise. The example of this devoted sincere lover is really rare. When he reached Paro's village he was on the verge of death but still had the hope to meet Paro. At last he reached the village Paro lived



in and in front of Paro's house breathed his last. This last chapter brings tears to the eyes of the readers and we feel how unfortunate he was. No dear and near one was present near him to shed a single drop of tear. Paro too was absent when this doomed lover left the world after suffering a lot.

The characterization of Devdas is excellent. One can not help out shed tears during the reading of the novel. Devdas bears the message of love, the eternal love that is beyond everything. He stands for the word love. The love-triangle between Chandramukhi, Devdas and Paro is unique in its portrayed and absoluteness.

K. L. Saigal as Devdas

The name 'Devdas' inevitably conjures up the image of Saigal. The identification is so complete that any other artist exacting the role of Devdas probably falls short of expectation, at least to those who have seen Saigal's 'Devdas' of 1935. Saigal's down to earth portrayal of the frustrated lover made the character of Devdas a cult figure. Initially Saigal had sung only one song, *Balam aaye baso more man mein*, and therefore the film had a lukewarm response at the beginning. Later, bowing to public

pressure, a sad song of Saigal "*Dukh ke ab din beetat nahin*' was added.

It was only the Saigal-magic as an actor and a singer that made the film an unprecedented success. Apart from the fact that Saigal, a singer par-excellence, acted without seeming to act. Saigal's mournful cry, in the state of intoxication, '*piya bin naahin aavat chain*' moved the viewers. It was not a full song, but just a few lines based on Ustad Abdul Karim Khan's thumri in raag 'Jhinjhoti'. The mournful effect Saigal created surprised even the great 'Ustad' himself. It was mainly Saigal's pathos laden voice that made the film a stupendous success.

The Tragic King of 20th Century

Based on Sarat Chandra Chatterjee well reputed novel 'Devdas' the first production was made in 1935 by the inimitable P.C. Barua. In P.C.Barua's Devdas, K.L. Sehgal immortalized himself as the doomed lover. The second effort was much successful and popular with the unique thespian-Dilip Kumar in the movie 'Devdas' made by Bimal Roy. The very mention of Devdas conjured up only one image - Dilip Kumar. The tragedy king was absolutely made for the movie and performed suitably. It is over forty years that he performed in Devdas.

The character of Devdas in this movie was very much true to the novel and it was a very moving piece of

The screen legend has an interesting background behind his filmy career. Yusuf Khan, as the Peshawar born Dilip was known before he was rechristened Dilip Kumar, ran away from his home to Pune. There he worked as an assistant manager at an army canteen. Dilip Kumar left Pune to reach Mumbai to be a hero on the screen. Devika Rani, a leading figure of Bollywood impressed by him offered him the role of hero in 'Jwar Bhata' (1944). From 1944 to 1982 this great hero proved himself as an icon and a thespian tragic hero of Bollywood. His landmark films 'Mela', 'Mughal-e Azam'(1960) and 'Ganga Jamuna'(1961) are well known films done by Dilip Kumar. At the age of forty four, this tragic hero married a twenty two years old fragile beauty- Saira Banu . He worked with Saira in films like 'Gopi', 'Sagina' and 'Bairaag'. In the year 1982, with Subhash Ghai's film 'Vidhata' he showed his talent again.

Dilip Kumar had the power to rule over the screen for fifty years continuously.

A confident man with definite principles, Shah Rukh proved himself as a good student and later on as a great actor of Bollywood. After his parent's death Shah Rukh started his career and had undergone a hard time and struggle in Bombay.

The T.V. star of 'Circus' became famous and popular after his film 'Deevana' in 1992. With the films 'Baazigar' (93) and 'Darr' (93) Shah Rukh proved his potential and his talent for acting. The film 'Dilwale Dulhaniya le Jayenge' (95) was a challenge for any actor but ShahRukh showed his versatility. Films like 'Karan Arjun' , 'Kabhi Haan Khabi Naa' and 'Yes Boss' show him in different roles with different aspects.

As a successful actor he is now found on the silver screen. His sincerity, hard work and struggle brought him the roles like 'Devdas' in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's film of the same name and with a great skill and confidence he achieved the pinnacle of success. Not only as an actor but as a sincere husband and a loving father he is known to all his fans.

work. Before doing the film Dilip Kumar read the novel minutely and tried to bring perfection in the character played by him. It really moved him.

As he studied the character with a depth of mind and keen eye, he could not accept the fact of Devdas's drinking habit. The movie had a good influence on him. The tragedy itself was so alcoholic and like a slow poison, that sadness spread over his mind. Even the loneliness and suffering of Devdas moved his mind so much that he was forced to visit the psychiatrist in order to bring back a healthy, normal life. Undoubtedly, this fact proves that how much devoted, sincere, and a great actor he was.

The death scene itself was also disturbing for him because this great tragedy king had performed the role of a dying man in his earlier films. It was a difficult thing to "die" before the camera in different pose in different times. Though the entire scene represented by him succeeded to shed the tears of sympathy of the audience and brought the catharsis effect at the end of the movie.

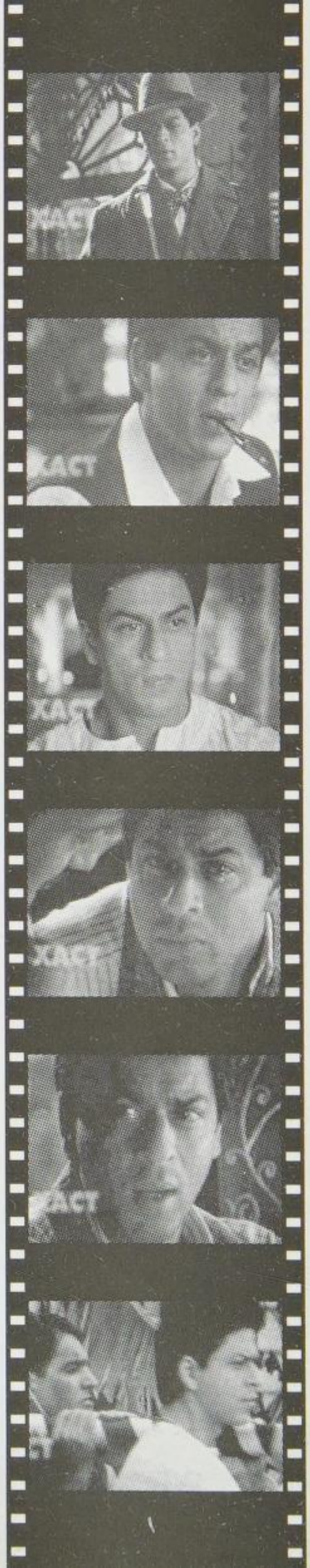
The great actor when asked about the difficulties faced by him during his performance replied with a frank tone that he was uneasy with the initial scenes of the movie 'Devdas' made by Bimal Roy. In the famous scene where Devdas beats Paro with the bait on the river side was infact a cruel and inhuman act. To hit Suchitra Sen with a bait was also equally a hard task for him. In this episode his dialogue delivery was extremely touchy and

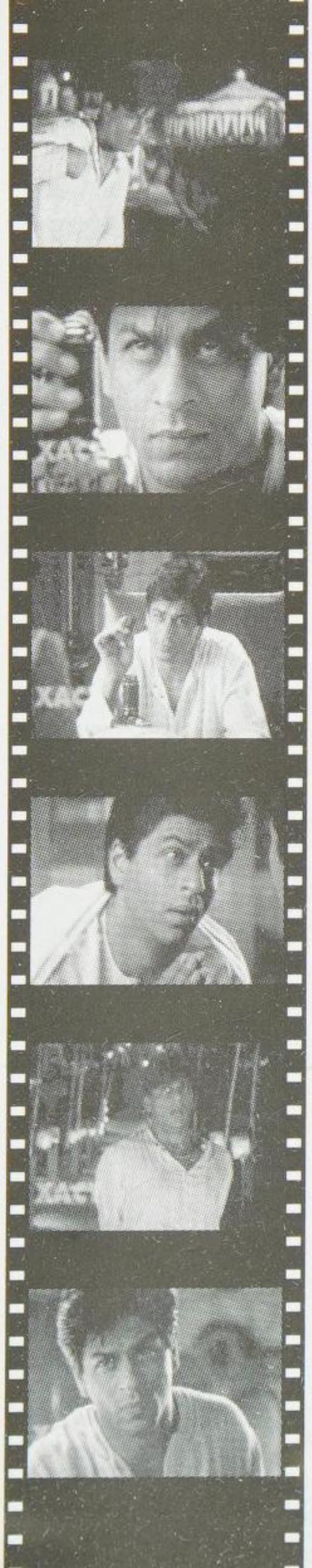
striking. Suchitra Sen also had the expression conveying self respect and ego. In the setting of 1955 with the direction of a Bengali director, the film reached the pinnacle of success. What the actors did half, century back was appreciated much and criticised less. It became very popular and the box-office was full. Amongst the unforgettable movies performed by the tragic hero, Devdas stood out on its own.

Devdas of this Millennium

What K.L. Saigal attempted in 1935, what Dilip Kumar portrayed in 1955, has been attempted in 2002 by Shahrukh Khan in Sanjay Bhansali's 'Devdas'. With this role Shahrukh has added, yet another feather to his cap. His performance in the film has been appreciated both in India and abroad.

Shahrukh was quite devoted and sincere towards this legendary acting assignment. As he was to perform the role of a drunkard, Shahrukh used to drink Bacardi. Such involvement is quite commendable for a person, who normally does not drink. To feel the role and to be able to do justice to it, Shahrukh was sad for one year for he believes in the principle that sadness brings out the best in us. His involvement was in the first place, due to the larger than life character of Devdas. Secondly, after failure of Ashoka in the box office he had to prove himself in Devdas. The reason behind his choosing the film is it's story. It's





greatness and grandeur and it's classic appeal made Shah Rukh to approach the film. He was ready to take the risk of playing the role for the third time in Hindi movies when Dilip Kumar and K.L. Saigal had already given their best performances in the earlier movies. Shah Rukh before acting in the role made a hard research on Devdas. He read the book as well as watched the previous movies.

The famous dialogues, delivered in a very realistic and attractive way, were possible for Shah Rukh and Shah Rukh only. The heart-broken doomed lover in the 'Kotha' of Chandramukhi lipped the famous dialogue - "*Kaun Kambakt bardast karne ke liya pita hai?*" Again, he out of hatred and bitterness tells Chandramukhi "*Choona maat - abhi bhi kuch hosh baki hai.*" In a different context after the death of Devdas's father Shah Rukh like a real drunk and lost man consoled his mother by saying that "*bura hua, bahoot bura hua, bhale aadmi the*" When the movie ends the audience can still hear the echo of Shah Rukh's backoning "Paro, Paro".

Shah Rukh's interaction with Madhuri as well as with Aishwarya Rai is dealt with equal importance, sincerity and efficiency. In front of Paro he is a man with pride and a childish manner. With Chandramukhi his treatment is different. There Shah Rukh is rude and cruel and insults her roughly. Both as a man replete with love and hatred Shah Rukh is great. His excellent expression in

a naturalistic way really claims.

There are some striking and touching scenes in the movie 'Devdas' - the wedding night of Paro is one of them. Shah Rukh's helpless beating of Paro and attending his soulmate's marriage brings tears to our eyes. The first meeting with Chandramukhi is also a noticeable scene. Shah Rukh's restrained attitude, the expression of hatred and the controlled dialogues spoken in this moment prove his talent. Sanjay has produced another important scene when Devdas is seen coming in a drunken state to attend his father's death ceremony. Here also Shah Rukh as a great actor catches our notice. His performance in the last scene is also painful and sympathetic. During this scene everyone control their tears or perhaps shed a single drop as a tribute to Devdas as well as to Shah Rukh.

Generally the great actors after performing good roles are somehow influenced by the character they had played. It also happened with Shah Rukh Khan. After working three years with Bhansali on Devdas, Shah Rukh missed the moments of being sad. He during an interview said, "For an entire year I was sad." The character of Devdas stirred his mind so deeply that sadness spread over his mind after completing the film.

The performance by Shah Rukh Khan has been applauded not only in India, but also abroad. At the Cannes film festival, where the film was first shown, many

congratulated him for his masterly performance. With Devdas, Shah Rukh has entered annals of Indian cinema and will be remembered for long for his acting ability.

Deviation from the Original Novel

While, in the original novel there is no mention of Devdas's going to Oxford for pursuing higher studies, rather it is to the city of Calcutta, that he is sent for further studies; in the 2002 film version of Devdas, we see a chicly attired Devdas whose return from Oxford is being celebrated by the Mukherjee family.

Sarat Chandra Chatterjee in his novel just showed the emotional bond that existed between Paro & Devdas. The feeling of love was so pure and spiritual throughout the novel-that was very true and natural during such a period where the lovers gave much more importance to emotional attachment than physical. Sanjay Leela Bhansali has moved a little bit away from this fact and showed that Devdas and Paro were very much concerned about their feelings and did not hesitate to show it. This can be accepted considering the commercial aspect of the movie.

Another scene where Devdas beats Paro with the bait at the question of their marriage and Paro's pride on her beauty. This scene is presented in a different way. Devdas at the night of Paro's marriage beats her with a pearl necklace and the blood oozing from her forehead symbolize the colour of sindoor and the blessings of a

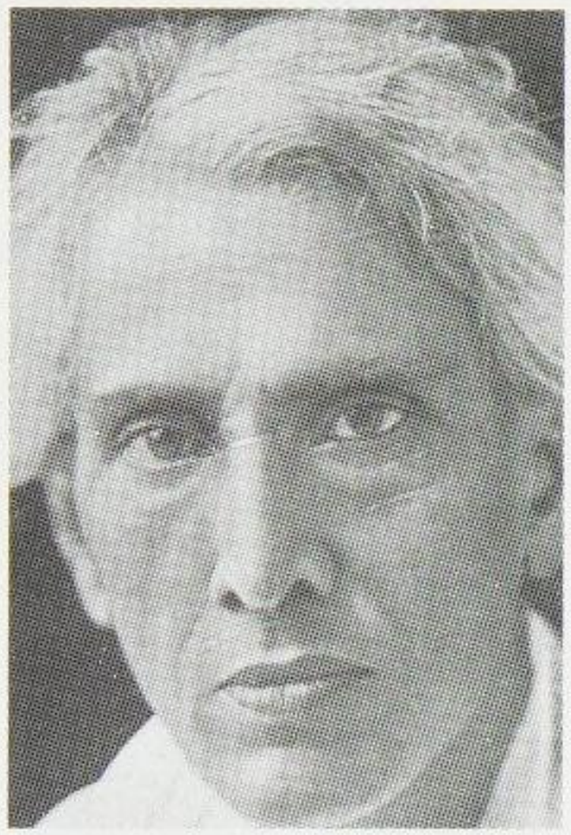
husband. Even Devdas attended his beloved's marriage. It was undoubtedly interpreted in a different way.

The first meeting between Chandramukhi and Devdas was also interesting to watch in the movie made by Bhansali. The reaction and expression of Devdas was cool and controlled. In the novel Sarat Chandra made it more realistic and naturally suited to his character. Devdas, out of hatred and anger bitterly whipped Chandramukhi with his sharp language. How ugly and mean she was, he exclaimed.

In Sanjay's movie Chandramukhi's role is short but significant as compared to Paro. But in the novel it is dealt with equal importance. In the movie Paro's role is elaborate and given much importance. Even the last meeting of Devdas and Chandramukhi is interpreted by Bhansali though in a different way. In the nove, for the first time Devdas talked with Chandramukhi softly and even addressed her as "bou" (wife) and this time he promised her that in the next birth he would love her. This sentimental part is absent in the film.

The transformation of Chandramukhi is shown in the movie but the simple life style adopted by Chandramukhi is missing in the film. The character of Devdas too is modified and changed a little bit by Bhansali. Sometimes he deleted portions from the novel and sometimes he added incidents of his own (which he calls his interpretation). Following Smita Jayakar's words we can say it is Shah Rukh's Devdas we are talking about.

Paro



Parboti of Sarat Chandra

Parvati or Paro as she is lovingly called, is the connecting thread in Shri Sarat Chandra Chatterjee's classic. She is constantly in reader's mind, even then, when the author focuses on other characters of the novel. The portrayal of the character engenders in readers' mind a feeling of affection, respect and above all sympathy towards her. The reader wishes to have the power to alter the course of the story and turn things in Paro's favour. Her devotion and sincerity towards Devdas should have lead their relationship to a logical conclusion. However, Sarat Chandra denies his character a marital union with her lover.

Paro of the classical novel is a resident of a village in Bengal. She belongs to a middle class family headed by her father Shri Neel Kantha Chakrawarti. Her mother, Sumitra belongs to a particular caste of Bengal, members of which take bride price from the groom's family when they give away their daughters in marriage. This caste, and therefore the family, is looked down upon by the people of higher social order. Paro is deeply attached to a member of such a higher social circle, namely Devdas.

The author introduces Paro and Devdas as great

friends. Paro is seven years old and so deeply attached to Devdas that she submits to all his orders and even tolerates the physical blows he inflicts upon her from time to time. Paro is tolerant. This is however, not at the cost of her self-respect. In one of the episodes, Devdas beats Paro and she is bruised badly. This is when Paro brings food for Devdas unaccompanied with water. Devdas gets furious at her carelessness and beats her. The insulted Paro goes and complaints to his father. However, her love for Devdas surfaces again, and she makes use of this occasion to launch a complaint against the schoolteacher who had punished Devdas. Seeing her injured condition, Devdas' father asks for the reason for her condition. Instead of declaring that it was Devdas who had done this to her, she names the teacher as the doer of this torture.

Paro grows up to be a radiant beauty endowed with all feminine charms. The innocent childhood friendship continues. Paro however, realizes gradually, that her liking for Devdas is not very different from that of a woman for a man. Aware of this feeling of her's, Paro's mother proposes for her marriage with Devdas. But his father turns down her proposal. Paro's parents fix her marriage elsewhere.

Courageous and bold Paro comes to Devdas's house in the middle of the night suggesting they elope. Devdas sends her back. Devdas goes to Calcutta and writes a letter declaring that the relationship between them was

not that exists between a man and a woman and that he had never felt that he was in love with her. Therefore he cannot marry her against his father's wishes. He also goes on to say that her being from a low status family is also a hindrance in the path of their marriage. Helpless Paro gives in to her mother's wishes and marries the groom of her mother's choice, who is a Zamindar of her father's age, and widower at that.

Sarat Chandra's Paro is very egoistic. Devdas, after he had turned down Paro's marriage proposal, realizes that he wants otherwise. He therefore requests Paro to forget all that he had said and marry him. Unforgiving Paro however, had by now agreed to her marriage with a person chosen for her by her parents. Standing true to her word Paro rebuffs his overtures. Paro, though still in love with Devdas marries the elderly Zamindar. Devdas leaves the village and goes away to Calcutta.

Sad and lovelorn Paro carries on as the wife of Zamindar and mother of three children whom she received in her marriage along with her husband. Two of these are elder even to her. Unhappy Devdas takes to drinking and consumes himself to death. Paro tries to meet her dying Devdas, but in vain.

Paro as portrayed by Sarat Chandra is egoistic. She is a beloved stronger than her lover. She puts her self

respect before anything. She is mature, cool, composed, with great patience and nervous strength. She feels the pains that life has given her, but suffers silently and with dignity.

The Bengal Beauty as Paro

Different actresses have been made to play the character role of Paro in various adaptations of the novel. In the 1935 Devdas directed by P.C. Barua the role was played by Jamuna who later married the director. Suchitra Sen played this character in 1955 Devdas. In Devdas directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansal this role was given to ex-miss world Aishwarya Rai.

Devdas was the first Hindi film of the Bengali cinema's foremost female actress Suchitra Sen. She won wide acclaim in Hindi Cinema as well, for her role as Paro. She appeared just the right choice for this role. The village like simplicity of Sarat Chandra's Paro, has been expressively brought out by the actress. She has also succeeded in conveying emotions of anger, sadness, embarrassment which forms so much a part of Paro's

The Miss World as Paro

This simplicity of Paro is lost in the role performed by the glamorous Aishwarya Rai in Sanjay Leela Bansali's Devdas. Her make up, glitter has infact hightened not only

Suchitra Sen, or Rama, as her real name was before being rechristened as Suchitra, was Bengali cinemas's Prima Donna, nearly throughout her acting career. As soon as her name comes up, her million dollar smile and acting prowess, especially in the emotional scenes, is what comes to one's mind. The legendary pairing of Bengali cinema's mega star Uttam Kumar and Suchitra Sen, is still remembered fondly by the old timer movie buffs. Suchitra Sen, had acted only in a few Hindi movies, in which she won wide acclaim, like Bombay Ka Babu, Mamata and Aandhi. Devdas, made in 1955, by Bimal Roy, was her first Hindi film. She was widely appreciated in her portrayal of Paro's character. The mother of Moonmoon Sen, the grandmother to Raima and Riya, two budding actresses and the daughters of Moonmoon; the Suchitra of today voluntarily leads the life of a recluse, away from the arch lights which were once a part of her daily existence.

her beauty but also her tinsel-town looks. However, this film has helped her evolve as an actress. The film in line with other films has proved to be a training ground for otherwise untrained actress. She has come very far as an actress from her debut film and given a mixed performance in Sanjay Bhansali's adoptation of the classic novel. In certain scenes, like Paro's separation from Devdas at the time of her marriage and whole set of events surrounding the occasion, and the final scenes of the film, Aishwarya has succeeded in bringing out intensity of emotions. However, at many points her beautiful but not very expressive eyes fail to change with the demands of the scene. However, her performance is praiseworthy considering her not so long association with the acting world.

Aishwarya accepted this complicated role due to three main reasons. Firstly it was an opportunity to work with legendary Shahrukh Khan and a bonafide superstar like Madhuri Dixit. Secondly the film was a classic. To work in a film based on a classic according to Aishwarya is a rare opportunity. Sanjay Leela Bhansali is also one of those directors, Miss Rai would have liked to work with.

Trained in classical dance since childhood, the dancer in her has found expression in the film. She dances with great ease vigour and flexibility. Directors may trust

her with dance based roles in their future projects.

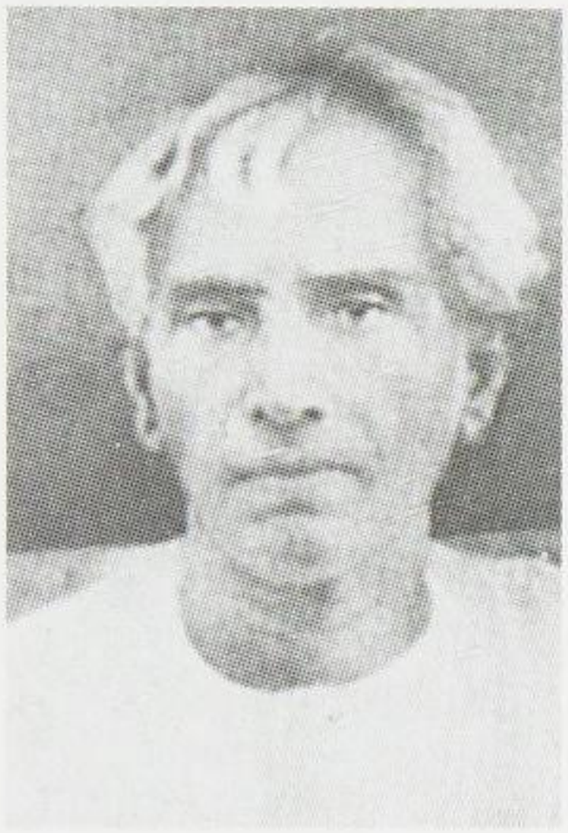
Such creditable performance from Aishwarya has come during a lean phase of her life, in which she was going through a lot of pain in her personal life. According to Bhansali this pain could be seen in her eyes while playing Paro.

Bhansali on his part has made Paro's role focal point of the film. The original script had both heroines sharing equal screen time and lines. But Bhansali deviated from the original and incorporated more incidents and even an extra song.

Bhansali has also made other major deviations from the original. Paro and Chandramukhi are friends and sympathetic towards each other in Bhansali's Devdas. Tying them together is their love for Devdas. In the original script however, Paro never meets Chandramukhi. In 1955 version also, there was only a passing shot with Chandramukhi, on the road to Devdas's village the opposite direction. These women cross each other and then turn to look at each other.

However, in Bhansali's Devdas, these two women are made to meet not only a number of times but also do a dance sequence together.

Chandramukhi

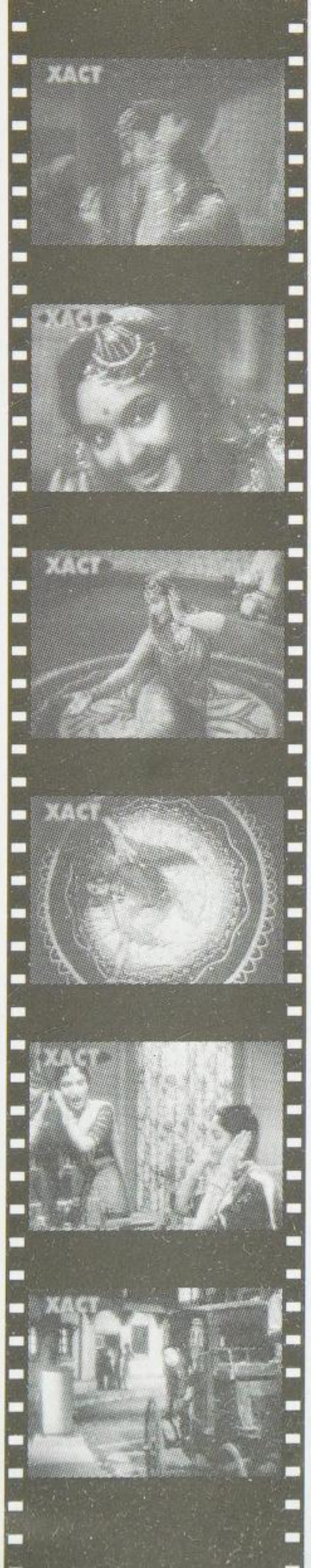


Sarat's Eternal Creation 'Chandra'

In 1917 Sarat Chandra penned down a romantic tragedy named Devdas, that can be compared with Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. The novel tells about the three young romantic souls devoted to love and selfsacrifice. In fact, a love triangle is made between the three of them which culminates in the painful death of Devdas. In Devdas's life the two beloveds play an important role in the different phases of his life. The irony is that whereas one is calm, cool and controlled-Parboti of a middleclass family in rural village, Chandramukhi is a well known and beautiful tawaif in Calcutta's 'Babumahal'. She has the youth and aggressive beauty with a plethora of shrill tongue. Her entrance into the 'Kotha' life is very interesting, the novel during a conversation Chandramukhi admits to Devdas that she left her lover because of the jewellery she desired and which he was unable to give her. Chandramukhi then easily adopted the 'Kotha' life which gave her money, jewellery and all the comforts a metropolitan city like Calcutta in 1917 could provide. But her pride and flexible nature got a striking shock when she first met Devdas. It was a nice evening when she was bedecked herself in all her fineries to enchant

the *Babus*. But Devdas at the very first sight talked to her with a bitter hatred "*Ki avabya, ki Kutsit*" (How vulgar and ugly.) This very first sentence was uttered with such a bitterness that she lost the power to reply. She was stunned and confused. Then Devdas rudely asked her if it was money she asked for. Chandramukhi was utterly dumb founded astonishing her, Devdas without a second thought gave her money and left swiftly. Chunnilal, the mess-partner of Devdas was requested by Chandramukhi to bring Devdas once more. Actually it was a new event in Chandramukhi's life that a stranger came and made her spell bound and speechless. Within such a brief period she experienced the deep hatred and suffered the insult from a rude person but at the same time it was accepted with a strange comfort and calm resignation.

This "mehfil" girl experienced a new thing in her life and felt the absence of Devdas. With great hopes she met Devdas for the second time but he was in the same unchanged mood. Devdas behaved in a very rude way to her. Nothing but insult, neglect and hatred came from his mind. Openly he said to her that it was only to tolerate Chandramukhi and the dirty atmosphere of the 'Kotha' that he was sinking under wine. It was the only companion that helped him to survive, to exist. Even her touch was intolerable to him. Still Chandramukhi due to her deep



love and affection tolerated his each and every insult, the negligent manner and torturing comments were medicines for her. Devdas's words were to her just like God's voice. She could not deny the first *dastak* of love in her closed doors. The society she lived in was so dirty and monotonous with lust and greed-that the scorching shrill tongue of Devdas was a relief to her. It was this love that transformed her from a Satan to a Saint. Chandramukhi undergoes a drastic change in her life. She left the *rangmahal* or *mehfil*, all the luxuries and comforts---and chose a simple life. Nearby Devdas's village she stayed at Assathjhuri village and became a well reputed lady among the villagers. Only to see her lover-Devdas she again returned to Calcutta again to search for Devdas, who was in a wretched condition and had undergone physical and mental agony. She searched for him and found him on the road side on a lonely night. Chandramukhi's this new image as Yogini and a devoted lover even touched Devdas. This time he talked with her very softly for the first time. He even began to address her with a loving tone "bou" (wife). This sweet address and the soft attitude of Devdas was like a gift of Paradise for Chandramukhi. She was overwhelmed with joy and happiness. After recovering Devdas left for Allahabad. Sarat Chandra after this chapter never dealt with Chandramukhi in the novel.

The character the author portrayed is unique and extraordinary with eternal appeal. Her selfless love and self sacrifing nature raise our respect for her. Though she led the life of a courtesan, it was her sudden change that strikes the reader. Her devotion to Devdas is like Meera's love to Krishna. She has been criticized as well as praised by the critics but one can not deny her importance and presence in Devdas's life. With a motherly affection she tried to heal his broken mind whenever the situation demanded it. She never complained, never denied her offerings of love. It was spontaneous and like a flowing river. Whereas Devdas and Paro's life change from a happy state to an unhappy one it was her life that was uplifted and reformed.

The 'Amrapali' Girl as Chandramukhi

Half a century ago in 1955 director Bimal Roy made a film based on the novel of Sarat Chandra Chatterjee. In this movie the character of Devdas was played by the tragedy king Dilip Kumar. Opposite of this drunken protagonist Vyjayanthimala played the role of Chandramukhi. Vyjayanthimala was offered the role because of her dancing skills as well an acting talent. It was such an offer that made her excited and thrilled. Vyjayanthimala gave her best performance in the film. The

An extraordinary dancer, Vyjayanthimala's greatest legacy to Hindi cinema is de regeur for every girl who enters the bollywood film industry to be an accomplished dancer. As a four year old girl, she won her first accolades dancing before the Pope. She became a major star when her matchless dancing skills in Nagin (1954) proved to be crowd pullers. But there was more to Vyjayanthimala than mere dancing capability. When director Bimal Roy cast her as Chandramukhi in his version of Devdas in 1955, he was laughed at. But Vyjayanthimala proved her detractors wrong, when she won the "Best Supporting Actress Award" for her performance in the film. Her other memorable films include Madhumati, Sadhana, Ganga Jamuna and Sangam. She also won the Best Actress Award for the latter two films. Her dance number "Hotho pe aisi bat" was the highlight of Devanand's "Jewel Thief" and is viewed with awe till date. Vyjayanthimala Bali married Raj Kapoor's personal physician, Dr. Bali, and left films.

Then she became the mother of a son, Suchi, dabbled in various businesses like Shrimp fishing and was a MP from Madras for a while in the 80's.

Today, though she no longer faces the camera, the sound of her ghungroos still echoes on.

director, Bimal Roy, was very much helpful, instructed her thoroughly to get exactly what he wanted. According to Vyjayanthimala the whole atmosphere, the setup of the shooting was grand. Even the expressions and performances of the actors were very natural and spontaneous. To act against such a perfomance like 'Dilip Kumar' was also a great experience for her. What the film maker noticed in her face was her expressions when she struck myriad mudras during her dances.

In a recent interview on Devdas she says that- while in the movie Devdas made in 1955, there was no meeting between Suchitra Sen, who played Paro and Chandramukhi, played by herself. There was only a short scene where Paro and Chandramukhi while crossing the road just looked at each other. There was no meeting between them at all. To Vyjayanthimala this movie was a classic and the character of Devdas became a legend. As a classical dancer, purist and a traditionalist she preferred not to follow modernisation and fusion in such films.

Devdas brought a great success to her film career. Her ability to bring to fore Chandramukhi's selflessness made her to win, the 'best supporting actress award. But Vyjayanthimala refused to accept the award as she believed in her equal importance with Suchitra Sen in the film. This movie was a key to success in her life as the offers of new

movies came to her after the success of this film. The famous song in this movie picturised on Vyjayanthimala was "*Jise tu kabool kar le.*" In that century none but Vyjayanthimala had such will, ability and the dancing talent suited to Chandramukhi.

What the reader wished for reading in Sarat Chandra's novel, has been fulfilled by Sanjay in his film. He allows his Devdas and Paro to get married although symbolically and in private. Thus before the marital ceremony between Paro and Bhuvan Choudhury takes place, Bhansali, has had her already married.

Aishwarya has been recognized and noticed internationally for her role in Devdas. Her beauty and grace were the talk of the town at Cannes. This is yet another milestone in her journey towards stardom. How she proceeds will be seen in the times to come.

Madhuri as Chandramukhi

Hyperboles are used to describe Madhuri's beauty. Her admirers are as diverse as M.F Hussain and Farukh Abdullah. She with her enchanting beauty and breathtaking laughter, and last but not the least, with her enormous emoting capabilities, makes someone like M.F. Hussain proclaim that Sarat Chandra created the character

Madhuri Dixit - the name itself reminds us of a sweet monalisa's smile and beautiful expressive eyes with a gentle look. This pretty woman, the classic beauty of Bollywood started her career in the year 1984 in the film 'Abodh'. Inspite of the audiences' indifference towards her first film, she performed in 'Awara Baap' and 'Swati'. But her transformation from superfluous to superstar occurred with the film 'Tezaab' (1988) directed by Subhash Ghai. Her dance to the song "Ek do teen" and performance in the film, became so famous and popular that she got the opportunity to act in the hit movie 'Dil' (1990). After this film she never looked back and performed excellently in movies like 'Khalnayak', 'Beta', and 'HumAapke Hain Kaun'.

Right now, she is a successful actress in Bollywood and holds a very good position with the names of Rekha-Hema-Madhuri pronounced in the same breath.

of Chandramukhi, especially for Madhuri Dixit's portrayal of the same. The training she had in Kathak dancing, also helped her perform the role of the courtesan to perfection.

Though she hadn't worked with director Sanjay Leela Bhansali or her co-star Aishwarya Rai before,insiders say that the actresses showed a rare camaraderie and co-ordination amongst themselves.In the movie all her expressions and 'bhavas' are exquisite and perfect. Though she performed the role of a "tawaif" for the first time in her acting career, in the film Devdas, her performance belies this fact. Such was the sensuality and pathos she brought out through her characterization.

According to Madhuri, her character in the film Devdas is similar to that of Rekha in the movie "Muqaddar Ka Sikandar". Talking about the earlier two films made on Devdas in the year 1935 and 1955, Madhuri admits that Bhansali's treatment and interpretation of the novel is absolutely different from the earlier ones, hence it will be wrong to compare her with the previous actresses who played the role of Chandramukhi.

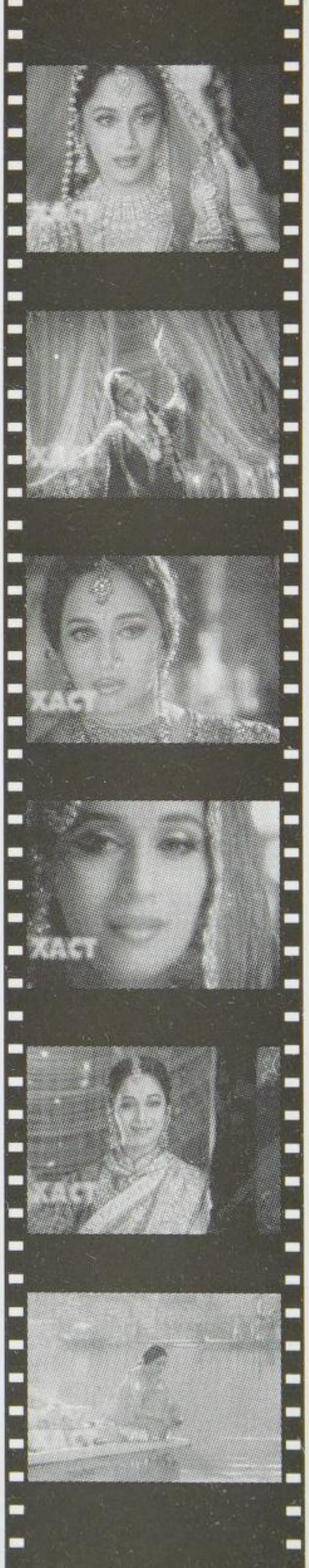
During the filming of Devdas, Madhuri was

dedication personified; whether it was Birju Maharaj's training workshop for dancing or her vocal lessons, Madhuri performed with sincerity and dedication, rare to see.

Different Centuries, Different Faces

In 1955 under the direction of Bimol Roy Vyjayanthimala 'the "Amarapali" of twentieth century played the role of Chandramukhi. Against the tragic protagonist Dilip Kumar. The eagle eyed director Bimol Roy noticed the *bhavas* in her face and the *mudras* of her dancing mood. Vyjayanthimala's beauty itself also made him approach her with such an offer. As the character had different dimensions and its own complexities, it was not very easy task to perform such a role. Opposite to Chandramukhi's role there was Paro-played by Suchitra Sen. The wonderful thing about this movie was its realistic approach. Everything was so believable, that the roles could be identified with.

After fifty years Sanjay Bhansali, the promising director has made another Devdas starring by Shah Rukh



Khan, Madhuri Dixit and Aishwarya Rai. In this film the roles of Chandramukhi is played by the one and only Madhuri.

The character of Chandramukhi in the novel is very much feminine and poignant. This is the point that attracted Madhuri to choose such a role. According to the novel, the Chandramukhi should be utterly beautiful, a very good speaker with her intelligence and dancing skills. Madhuri's Kathak training helped her a lot during the movie and her excellent, brilliant performance again prove her to be a very good actress. What Vyjayanthimala was in her century as Chandramukhi-Madhuri is to us in this century. During an interview Madhuri admit that Bimal Roy and Sanjay Bhansali's treatment of the novel is different so it will be wrong to compare her performance with Vyjayanthimala.

Vyjayanthimala says that in her movie and in the real novel the meeting of Paro and Chandramukhi never occurred but in Sanjay's film both of them dance in a happy mood affectionately. While in the movie Devdas, made in 1955, Vyjayanthimala as Chandramukhi and Suchitra as Paro just pass each other on the roadside in the village of Devdas. There

is no such scene in the movie of Sanjay Bhansali.

Differences are there but the common thing is that both Chandramukhis are appreciated and praised. The way they danced is unforgettable and extraordinary. Both of them are appealing and unique in their presentations. Vyjayanthimala as Chandramukhi performed in the song *"Jise tu kabool karle" and Madhuri's dance in such mujjra songs "Kahe chhed mohe" and "Kavith channs" are beyond question.*

The award of Best Supporting Actress was offered to Vyjayanthimala but she refused to take this award. As she felt that her role was of equal importance to that of Suchitra Sen. Madhuri is also praised by M. F. Hussain. Since the last two months the box office is showing Devdas to be a success.

Chunnilal - *The Kolkata Babu*

2002's Chunnilal

A Tonic in the Tragedy

In the novel written by Sarat Chandra Chatterji the role of Chunnilal has its own impact. Infact he was the first friend whom Devdas met in the strange city Calcutta. When Devdas comes to Calcutta for higher studies, he stays in a mess where Chunnilal has been living since nine years. Chunnilal was that sort of person who never seems to be in problem or in crisis. His fickle, funny nature with a typical "*babu mezaj*" differentiates him from the other characters. Chunnilal is always happy & is a tension free type of person. We can say he led a "*bindass*" life . In the beginning, it seems that Devdas and Chunnilal are opposite in nature but later on the picture reverses. Every evening Chunnilal dresses in his fine *dhoti* & *kurta* in order to prepare himself for known *kothas* of Calcutta. Devdas regularly saw him going to such places but never had any interest to accompany him. When he is at a critical juncture of his life, the absence of Paro seems to him a big vacuum. He tries to forget the world. In such a weak state of mind Devdas goes with Chunnilal and mets Chandramukhi- A woman beyond his knowledge. It was Chunnilal's friendship or more aptly enimity we can say

that provoked him to become a drunkard and a spoilt man. Chunnilal just showed the first slope of downfall. The next was made by Devdas himself.

'Bindaas' Jackie as Chunnilal

Coming back to the movie we find that Jackie Shroff is very suitable for the character of Chunnilal. Jackie performed excellently. A cool Chunnilal we get in the movie made by Sanjay Bhansali. Chunnilal the character is a bridge between the two halves of the story. It is because of him that the story proceeds after Paro's marriage to the Zamindar. To play such a babu character and to have such an airy mind with a very light heart is no doubt a difficult and great task. The drowsy and a bit reddish eyes of Jackie, his sudden out bursts of laughter helped him a lot to the character as it were. As an actor he is great and knows exactly what is expected from him.

Through out the movie Chunnilal dressed stylishly - an open collared 'sherwani over embroidered *kurtas*'s and crisp *dhotis*. A lot of detail went into his accessories like rings and buttons. Confidence and flamboyance is reflected through his dress.

Jackie's fan-mail has increased a lot after performing the character of Chunnilal. Aware and confident he says "Devdas wouldn't move if it weren't for me"

Kaushalya - *A Loving Mother*

Sarat Chandra's typical Bengali Woman

Devdas's mother has a very important role, as it is she, who acts as a catalyst in the novel. In the novel we find her as a dominating, powerful, aristocratic Zamindar's housewife, who cares very much for his son and loves him blindly. She has a matured personality with her womanly intelligence and class consciousness. Not for a single moment she forgets her position and status. Infact this pride and position consciousness brings the fatal doom in her own son's life. When Paro's mother gives her a hint about Paro's and Devdas's mutual liking for each other and expresses a desire for their marriage, she just simply dismisses it.

Smita Jayakar - A Look of Arrogance

The same thing is represented in the movie by Smita Jayakar. She looked very dignified and a well polished lady with a high commanding power. Previously she was offered the role of Paro's mother but later on Sanjay suggested her to act as Devdas's mother. She was chosen because of her aristocratic looks. Where Paro's mother looks very much moderate, Devdas's mother is

very firm and strong. The film differs from the novel where Dev's mother mentions that Paro is a '*nautch*' girl's daughter. The novel says that Paro belongs to a middle class family and the custom allowed her family to accept dowry during the marriage. This fact is distorted in the film.

When she sees Devdas spoiling his life by drinking wine and wasting money, she realizes her guilt and laments. If we divide the whole movie in two parts we find her in gorgeous Bengali saris in the first half of the movie but after the death of Devdas's father she wears the milk-white 'than' (coarse sari) of a widow. Her role is really touchy and interesting. Her commanding voice and scolding of Devdas is lovely in one scene where she shouts at him and says, "Nobody will understand you here. Just leave this house."

Smita Jayakar enjoyed her role and praised Sanjay Bhansali as well as Shah Rukh because of their sincerity and devotion to the movie. After "Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam" it is nice to see her on the screen of the film Devdas.

Sumitra - *A Helpless Mother*

Sarat's Sincere Sumitra

Sumitra in Sarat Chandra Chaterjee's novel is a simple lady. She is portrayed as a typical Bengali housewife, devoted to her family. She is extremely fond of her daughter Paro as she is their only child. Sumitra as a mother scolded Paro whenever she did some mischief along with Devdas in her childhood. As Paro's mother she was concerned about her daughter's feelings about Devdas. She had nourished a hope to see her daughter married to Devdas. That's why she gave a hint to Devdas's mother regarding the same. But she was insulted and rebuked. Her middle class ego got hurt and within one week she fixed Paro's marriage with a rich and aged widower.

Whatever a woman in such a setting could do, she did. It was not a very easy task to marry her too young, beautiful daughter with an aged man but she sacrificed her in order to get a good status in society. They had a custom that brought the girl's family, dowry during the daughter's marriage. For this reason also, she supported her daughter's marriage with Bhuban Chaudhury. Beside this she also wished to compete with Kaushalya- Devdas's mother as she found her to be extremely proud.

Kiran Kher as Sumitra

The National Award winner for Rituparno Ghosh's 'Bariwali', Kiran Kher made her mark this time in Sanjay Bhansali's 'Devdas'. Acting as Sumitra (Paro's mother) she found her role in the film special for many reasons. Firstly, Devdas has brought her accolades from critics all over. Secondly, it is her second assignment after she has made a comeback to the 'filmy' sphere. Sumitra of Sanjay Leela Bhansali's film is a very definite character. She is a 'nautanki' girl married to a Zamindar. Though advanced in years, she is young at heart and full of life. She is very happy with her life and is emotionally satisfied with the love and affection of her daughter, Paro.

The love relationship between Devdas and Paro is known to Sumitra. She encourages it. But Sumitra is also naive. This is to an such extent, that at times she even appears foolish. For this reason she gets publically humiliated many times. She is basically a good hearted person. However this good hearted person in her gets a back seat when she is scorned by Devdas' family, when she proposes Devdas's marriage with Paro. This incident makes her more and more vengeful as the time passes.

Sanjay Bhansali has modified the character slightly according to his needs. Where on one hand Bansali's

Sumitra is a 'nautanki' girl, Sarat Chandra's Sumitra is simply a woman belonging to a caste group in feudal Bengal, which was known to take money from a groom's family in exchange of their daughters. That the family was looked down upon is conveyed by Sri Sarat Chandra as well.

Bhansali has brought out the character in great details as compared to Sumitra of Sri Sarat Chandra Chaterjee's novel.

Kiran has performed her role extremely well. Her knowledge of Bangla which she learnt for her previous project 'Bariwali' helped her to insert a certain mannerism to the character of Sumitra.

The dance number which she performed in the film is an thinkable for a person who is not used to commercial dancing in films. She has not only come up to the director's expectations and conveys adequately to the viewers the feelings of a mother.

The role, Kiran herself asserts, has given her a lot of scope to perform. She says "from flamboyant, young and larger than life character, to a woman who loves her daughter so much that she will do anything for her to feeling small when she is publicly humiliated and then pleading with Devdas's family moving to an angry, cold

and vengeful person." She further adds "there are a lot of shades in this character and I had a great time playing them. Especially because like in theatre, when a character is loud and flamboyant, one has to be careful not to overdo it, or it comes across, as loud and irritating".

The Two Father Figures

The Clash of Class

In the novel written by Sarat Chandra Chartterjee two father figures played a leading role. Both of them were conservative and narrow minded in such a society that encouraged the class system, Zamindari Pratha and the rules and regulations along with the customs. While Devdas's father-Narain Mukherjee was a very rich person and an authoritative figure in the village-Paro's father Nilkantha Chakraborty belonged to a middle class family and had his own landed property. But being the neighbour of such a Zamindar, Nilkantha Chakravarti and his family were friendly with Devdas's noble family. Devdas's father had an attachment for the little girl Paro and did not hesitate to beat Devdas when Paro complained .

Devdas's father is not to be considered as villain who did not allow them to marry. Living in such a feudal society, it was difficult to imbibe such thought. He loved his son very much as he thought about his son's future and sent him to Calcutta for studies. The question arises in our mind, that if for once he could have forgotten his status then everything would have been fine. His stubborn nature did not allow his loving son to fulfil his wishes. His

death is also a significant part of the novel. The two brothers Dvijdas and Devdas reacted in a different way. Dvijdas cried madly and shouted much but Devdas did not shed a single drop of tear. He just sat silently and observed like an audience.

Paro's father was concerned about his daughter's feelings and had hoped for the marriage between Devdas and Paro. The dream came to an end when he was refused and this refusal hurt his manly ego and middle class pride. Without a second thought he fixed his daughter's marriage with a man of forty. The ego clash between two father figures caused the misfortune of the two lovers. The result was as much bad as it could be.

Vijay and Sumit in Opposite Roles

In Sanjay Leela Bhansali's epic film 'Devdas' Vijay Crishna played the role of Narain Mukherjee, Devdas's father. In an interview he talked about the various aspects of Devdas, its sets, direction and about the stars who worked in it.

In the film 'Devdas', Devdas's father is shown as an advocate who is always busy with his files. He is a person with a rigid temperament and always in an angry mood. Not for a single moment he expresses father's love for his

son. He is always rude, stubborn and a *Ziddi* type of a person.

The change in Prakash Kapadi's script just before the shooting made Vijay Crishna nervous. However, later on as the rehearsals went on he felt much comfortable.

The role of Devdas's father was played by him with great ease. His stern nature has been shown in the movie. In the scene where he quarrels with his son on the question of Paro's marriage, he slapped Shah Rukh Khan. This hesitation was in his mind. Another difficulty he underwent was the death scene of Devdas's father. In this particular scene he 'died' forty times to bring perfection. It sounds very funny!

The character of Paro's father is played by Sunil Rege in Sanjay's film Devdas. He has a very small part to play but it is significant and perfect in its presentation. With this role he has got an opportunity to prove his calibre as an actor.

"Like in Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam, every artiste was given a different look; in Devdas again I have done the same. I used Dhakas for Kironji. I have used Tangails, Ashpards, Chudipards and Chinese brocade for Ash and Valkalams for Smita Jayakar."

- Neeta Lulla

Bhuvan Choudhury

- The Sudden Blow in Paro's Life

Sarat pinpoints the Custom

Zamindar Bhuvan Choudhury is a very warm and dignified man. He heads a large Zamindari. He is also the eldest male member of his family. Therefore, the responsibility of the Zamindari and the family has come to rest on his shoulders.

His family consists of his mother, his two sons and a daughter. He is deeply attached to his wife who died two years ago. The Zamindar still harbours the grief caused by the loss.

To beat the loneliness caused by his wife's demise, he keeps himself engaged throughout the day and also the night. Thus after his wife's death, he is home only occasionally. Death has become an emotional problem for him. Adding further to his problem is the pressure to remarry. His mother constantly suggests him to marry again for want of a lady of the house. A daughter-in-law could have also served the purpose. The eldest son, however, has decided never to get married. Responsible, as Bhuvan is towards his family and responsive to his mother,

Choudhury gets married again. His new wife Paro is thirteen years old. He himself has crossed forty. Though he marries Paro, he is full of realization that such a marriage is unjustified. He is true to himself and is quite straight forward. He repents that he should not have married her. He is vocal about this feeling in front of Paro.

His feelings towards Paro remained that of affection and sympathy of an elder towards a younger person.

Paro now belongs to his family. The Zamindar feels responsible and concerned for her. When Devdas is dying, Paro is out of her senses and runs in frenzy to see him. Confused and shocked at seeing her in such a condition, he orders his son to run after her to see what was the matter with her.

This character of Bhuvan Choudhury has been played by Vijayendra Ghatge in the film Devdas of the twenty first century. The Zamindar of the film sees his wife as his soulmate and her death means a permanent loss to him. This feeling of the Zamindar, is heard by the viewers from the character, which the novel is not expressive about.

Vijayendra Ghatge as Paro's Husband

Bhansali's Zamindar even tells Paro the place his wife has in his heart is permanent. No one else can fill the

vaccum created by her demise. He will never be able to forget her. He wants to welcome Paro into the house, but does not want her to have any illusions about the life she would lead with him. In their wedding night scene, he shows Paro the portrait of his first wife. He indicates subtly thereby that socially she may be his wife and will be so in future, but he will never touch her. He defines the parameters of their relationship very clearly. He tells Paro that she can do anything she likes within the *chaukhat* (door step) of the house literally and metaphorically.

Bhansali has dramatized Choudhury's character to fulfill the needs of Bollywood. The Zamindar is dignified, yet dislikes Paro's continuing love for Devdas. He does not allow her to meet Devdas even when he is dying. When Paro runs down to meet him, he orders the *Durbans* to close the main doors.

The doors in the novel are closed due to the confusion arising out of Paro's condition. However in Bhansali's film the doors close on Zamindar's orders, who wants to maintain the decorum of his family and avoid her meeting Devdas.

Sardaar as he is called in the film is a *Khandaani aadmi* (traditionalist). He is sensitive yet principled.

"I thought it would be a fascinating challenge for me as a director to present already known and loved characters, in my very own way, with my perspective."

- Bhansali

Manorama - *Paro's Friend*

The character of Manorama in Sarat Chandra's novel is not so prominent but has it's own special interest. Throughout the novel we can notice that she is the one and only friend of Paro, with whom she can share her thoughts, feelings and her views on Devdas. In the fifth chapter of the novel Manorama is introduced in the novel. The two childhood friends talk with each other about the thirteen years old Paro's approaching marriage with a man of forty. During their conversation Paro revealed that she considered Devdas as her husband and expressed her deep love for him. It was for the first time that Paro confidently accepted Devdas as her husband in front of anybody. After her marriage also she used to talk with Manorama about Devdas. When Devdas became an alcoholic and led a reckless, disordered life, it was Manorama who revealed the fact to Paro in a letter. This letter moved Paro so much that that very day she reached Talsonapur village to bring Devdas to her house.

Manorama and Paro have resounding contrasts in their characters. Manorama was a woman of limited thoughts. She accepted her life and everything as it came to her, without questioning or complaining. But Paro was

concerned about her love, her own feelings and the agony of love. In this regard we can say Paro was the epitome of a modern woman in such a custom laden society.

In the movie made by Sanjay Leela Bhansali, the role of Manorama was played by Jaya Bhattacharya. Being a Bengali girl she has done her small part with efficiency and skill. She looks very sad and melancholic when she sees her friend Paro getting married to Bhuvan Choudhury. Her role is very short in the film. It is not so prominent , but in this film too, Paro reveals her feelings about Devdas to Manorama.

Dvijdas - *A Kane like brother*

From the beginning of the novel itself, the character of Dvijdas is opposite to that of Devdas his brother. Dvijdas's parents get him married quite young and now he leads a life at home. He is concerned about the 'Zamindari' property and other materialistic things. Devdas on the other hand is careless, good hearted and romantic. Dvijdas is a man with a calculating mind. He is a person who never failed to take advantage of others whenever such an opportunity presented itself. In a remarkable scene in the novel at the death of his father Dvijdas was found crying hysterically and cursing his lot. The reaction of Devdas was somehow unnatural and helpless. He just sat beside a pillar silently and with his dull eyes observed the whole thing without speaking a word. It shows that Dvjidas could make a show of his emotions in public but Devdas could only suppress it. The striking fact is that in such a state of bereavement Dvjidas talked about the share inherited from his father. Easily he refused to give a portion to their mother but Devdas without hurting his brother's proposal was ready to give his share to his mother. This small incident shows the kindness of Devdas and the meanness of Dvijdas. He was careless towards his

mother as well as towards his brother. Dvjidas could have cared for his one and only brother who was destroying himself. But it is not expected from such a greedy, practical and cruel person.

Manoj Joshi as Dvijdas

The role of Dvijdas was played by Manoj Joshi in the film "Devdas" directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali. As a typical Bengali husband and calculating son he performed his role very well. He seems to be a coward and timid in front of Devdas in the scene where Devdas claimed the keys of the locker. But instead off doing the right thing, he did as his wife dictated.

Sanjay Leela Bhansali has indeed the knack to select the right actor for the right role.

Kumud - *The Arrogant Sister-in-law*

A Minor Character in Novel

In the novel "Devdas" written by Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, the character of Kumud, Dvijdas's wife, has an important role in its negative aspect. Dvijdas's parents get him married very young. The new bride has a sharp tongue and is also indecent in her comments. From the beginning itself, she dominates her husband who is naïve to the brink of being foolish. After the death of Devdas's father, she diverts all her attention towards her status as Zamindar's wife. She wishes to acquire as much property and wealth as possible from the bounties which her father in law has left behind.

In the novel an important chapter was written on Chandramukhi's meeting with Devdas's bhabhi. Chandramukhi went to Devdas's village in order to know about his present situation. She was intelligent enough to impress his bhabi and got the information that Devdas was in Calcutta in a miserable condition. Then Chandramukhi left for Calcutta to search for Devdas. Only for this once bhabi's character gets highlighted in this episode.

Ananya Khare - Devdas's Bhabhi

Sanjay Leela Bhansali has given a twist to her character and she is very much like a vamp girl quarrelsome and dangerous. From the beginning of the movie, she talks in a taunting tone and criticises each and everyone in a bitter way. This role is played by Ananya Khare (formerly Preeti Khare), a well known actress famous for her negative roles. The death of her father-in-law did not touch her. At the time of bereavement, she is busy with the maintenance of the lockers' keys. When Devdas asked her for the keys she refused to give it to him and made a great drama. Bhansali with a dramatic touch made this scene interesting to the audience. Shah Rukh's threat to them and his anger to burn the house was really moving.

Sanjay Leela has deviated from the novel of Sarat Chandra and to make his film 'filmy' employed such devices. He added the episode of angry Devdas, furious towards his brother and bhabhi's attitude. This deviation made her character more real and natural. In such a situation she was expected to act in such a manner. Kumud first sowed the seeds of discontent, in her mother-in-law's mind that Devdas and Paro were in love. She made her to believe that in the name of "Sandesh" Sumitra,

Paro's mother is in fact impressing them, in order to marry her daughter in their family. Kumud's foolish attitude, toneless song, evoked the laughter of the audience. To celebrate her pregnancy, Sumitra Paro's mother danced with happiness and spirit but Kumud along with her mother-in-law insulted her badly. Her expression and dialogue delivery are excellent and well suited to her role.

"As the music of Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam was a more researched affair,
I wanted to create Devdas spontaneously, straight from heart."
- Ismail Darbar

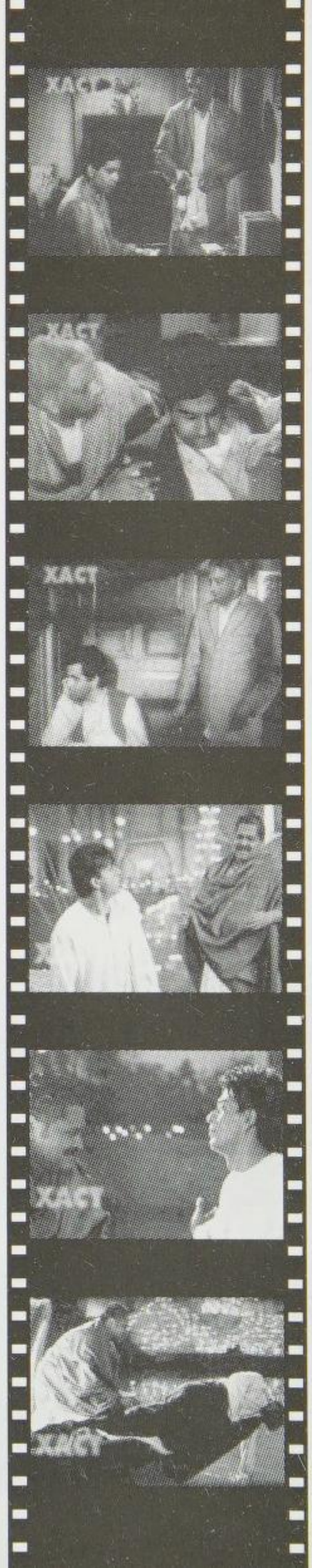
Dharmdas - *An Obedient Servant*

Obedient servants feature almost constantly in Sarat Chandra's novels Devdas is no exception. This time the servant is called Dharmdas. Dharmdas is a devoted servant, who from the very childhood, takes care of Devdas. As a person Dharmdas is honest and sincere. As a servant, loyal and dutiful. He has nothing to complain against his master. He was a sort of refuge for Devdas whenever he was angry or in a disturbed state of mind. He accompanied Devdas on all his journeys. He even went with him to Calcutta, when Devdas went there for studies. Gradually Devdas grows up and so does Dharmdas. Devdas is now a budding youth and Dharmdas an aging man. Little could the caring Dharmdas forsee the misery that the future holds in store for him. Devdas, whom he had brought up with love and care has taken to drinking due to his unfulfilled love. Helpless Dharmdas can do nothing but witness his master's failing health and life. He has no power to interfere or change the course of things. Dharmdas could only curse his owner. When in disturbed mental and physical state Devdas wished to visit Allahabad, Lahore and Bombay, Dharmdas accompanied him again.

In the 1955 version of the Film, Nazir Hussain played the role of Devdas. His parental concern for Devdas has been avidly portrayed by the actor. His character in this film is very close to that in the novel written by Sarat Chandra.

Sanjay Bhansali chose Tiku Talsania, the poor man's comedian for his Devdas. Whereas Dharamdas in the novel was serious and mature, Bhansali's is a happy go lucky man.

According to Tiku Talsania the comedians crave to do serious roles and it was his good luck that got him to this role. Beside appreciating the film Tiku Talsania praised the director, Sanjay Bhansali. He has two important scenes with Madhuri Dixit and Aishwarya Rai in the movie. The roles previously played by Tiku Talsania are quite different from that he has played in Devdas. This time he seems to be more careful in his performance.



Paro's Precious Jewels

The interaction of Paro with her children of Bhuvan Choudhury is really exceptional and interesting in Sarat Chandra's 'Devdas'. We are full of wonder and surprised to see that the thirteen years old Paro after reaching her husband's home askes her first question to twenty year old Mahendra, "Where are my other children?" Bhuvan Choudhury had three children by his wife Subhadra - Mahindra, Binodlal and Yashoda. Mahendra was the older one and a bachelor during his father's marriage. Binod was out of village for studies and Yashoda stayed in her husband's house in a nearby village.

During her first meeting with Mahindra, Paro affectionately addressed him as son and talked like a loving mother. As a dutiful mother she sent Mahendra to bring back Yashoda home in order to express her genuine love to her new daughter. When she came home she was surprised to see her too young, beautiful and extremely loving step-mother. Even her younger son Binod did not leave home after he came to know her motherly love and care. The relation of these three children with Paro demonstrates her capabilities to embrace strangers in a loving manner. The three of them developed a deep respect and love for her.

In the film made by Sanjay Leela Bhansali, the interpretation is a little bit different. Here Bhansali has shown that Paro has two step-daughters and one step-son. Yashoda of Sarat Chandra is here Yashomati. The role of Mahindra and Yashomati are played by Kopil Soni and Rashika Pratap Singh respectively. The first meeting with Yashoda and Paro is a great one in the film. The scene where Parvati takes out all her ornaments in order to give them to Yashomati, contains emotions and sentiments. But the son-in-law is a villain who later on tries to hamper the reputation and respect of Paro. In the last scene when Parvati runs madly after hearing the death news of Devdas, it is Mahendra who prevents her going. These characters are minor and less significant.

Kali Babu - *A Negative Twist in Devdas*

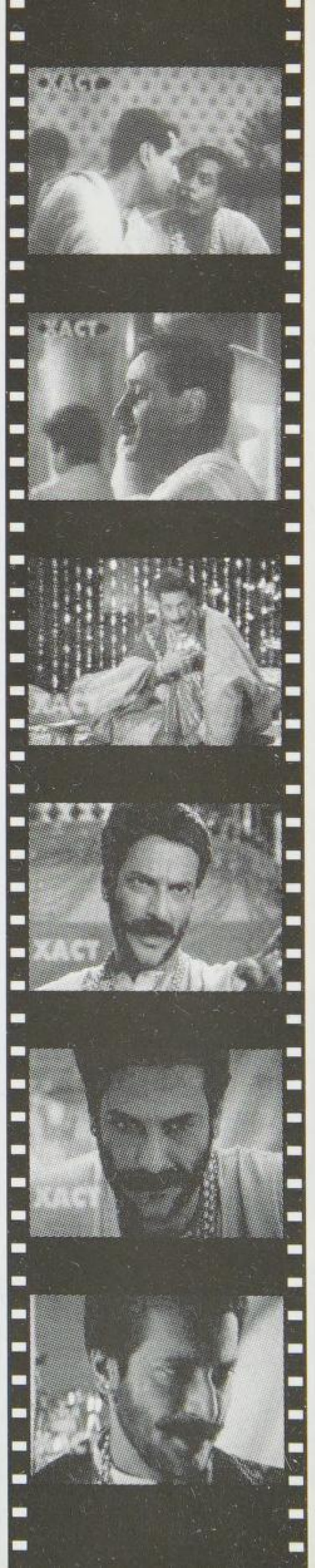
To make his film a commercial success and to put it in line with the formula movies, Sanjay Leela Bhansali has employed a villain in the movie. Kalibabu, son-in-law of Paro and Bhuvan Choudhury, played a villain in the movie. This role is played by the grave looking man Milind Gunaji. Whereas in the novel there is no mention of this 'Kalibabu'-Yashoda's husband, in the film in fact he is very much prominent. He is seen in the movie as a drunkard, indecent, and a man with a scheming mind.

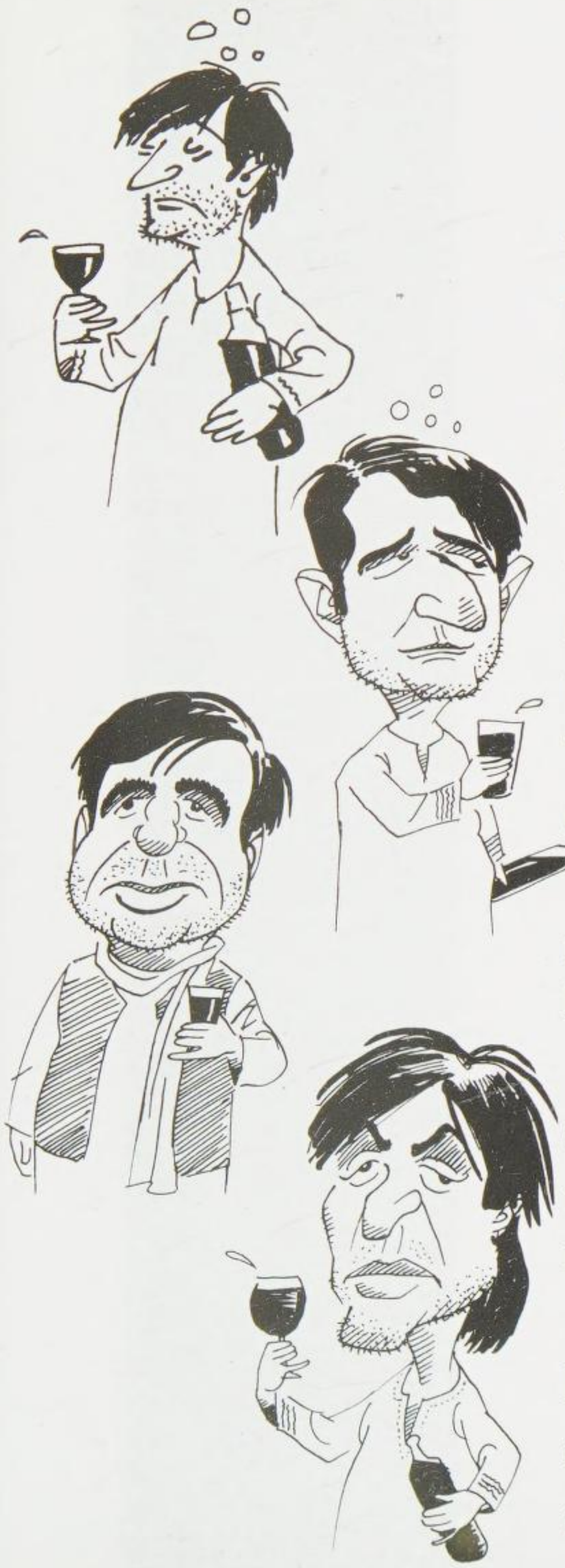
In the film Kalibabu was a regular visitor to the well-known 'Kothas'. During such a visit he came across Devdas in Chandramukhi's "mehfil". Chandramukhi's extreme attention towards Devdas made him jealous. During his second meeting with Chandramukhi, Kalibabu offered Chandramukhi the precious "ghoongroos" made of gold which she refused as she was entirely in love with Devdas .This refusal and insult were hard to accept. In order to take revenge on her he waited for the proper time and place. After this incident as a son-in-law, he meets his mother-in-law for the first time in his house. The scene presented by Bhansali is quite interesting and evokes the laughter of the audience. This fellow touches Paro's feet in

a crude manner, but Paro also teaches him a good lesson. This man was so vengeful that later on he disclosed Paro and Devdas's love-relationship in front of her husband and mother-in-law. He also revealed the fact in open public during the Durga Puja function that Chandramukhi was not the friend of Paro, rather she was a 'tawaif'.

As a result of this fact, Paro was punished by his husband and mother-in-law and never allowed to go out of the house.

Milind Gunaji performed his role as suited the character. Previously in 1955 in Bimal Roy's film the role of Kalibabu was played by Pran. In the former movie the role is almost the same, but it is noticeable that Sarat Chandra did not write about these above mentioned incidents. But then there must be a villain in a Hindi film!





The Changing Faces of Devdas

The first Hindi film on Devdas was released in the year 1935, which was directed by Pramathesh C. Barua. In the film, K.L.Saigal immortalized himself as the doomed lover. The film still remains a classic. This 1935 version of Devdas, gave film music a distinct identity. Although there were nine songs in the film, they were used less as mandatory requirements and more to emphasise the poignancy in the tragic tale. The magical score and lyrics of unforgettable tunes like "Dukh ke ab din beetat nahin" and "Balam aan baso more man mein", remain etched in the mind even today.

The film was essentially very simple in its presentation. Perhaps it was due to the fact that cinema had not yet developed a culture of its own.

While many films based on literary works often strayed majorly from the storyline, and many a times from the essence of the work, in the case of the 1935 version of Devdas, it was not so.

Bimal Roy, who was the cinematographer of P.C. Barua's Devdas, decided to remake the film. This film, made in the year 1955, had Dilip Kumar in the title role, and is the film, on Devdas, that most people remember. So

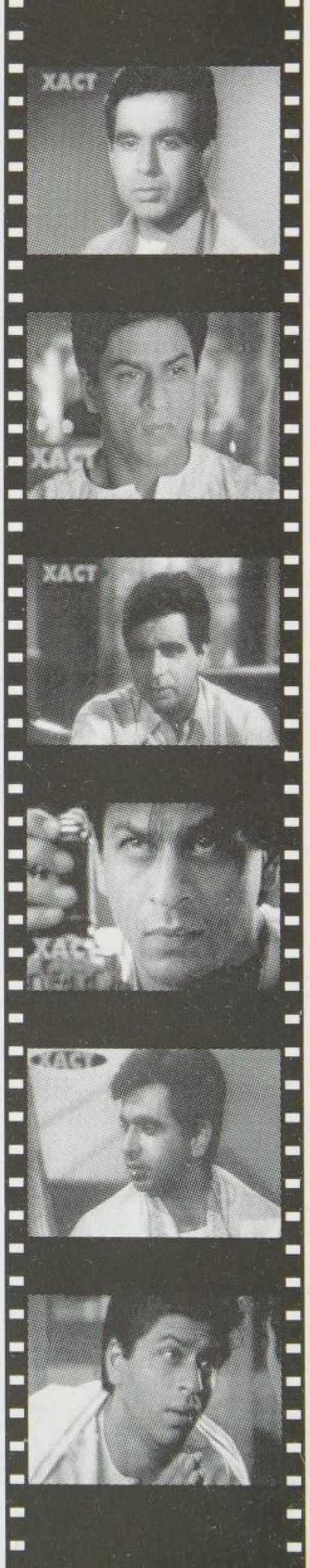
much so, that the very name of Devdas brings to one's mind the image of Dilip Kumar.

The other highlights of the film were, Vyjayanthimala in the role of Chandramukhi, and Bengals's beautiful and famous actress Suchitra Sen in the role of Paro. This film brought Vyjayanthimala (as Chandramukhi) in the limelight, asserting her as an actress, apart from being a fabulous dancer.

Bimol Roy's black and white version of Devdas was shot in a fascinating light and shade depiction underlining the stark emotional shifts in the lives of his flawed but achingly humane characters.

The film is richly embellished with imagery and desperation.

Dilip Kumar's physical traits as a drunk- the way he blinks as though trying to clear the mists from his mind-are very realistic, as are his eloquent silences. The acting prowess he demonstrated in Devdas won him the Best Actor award and a Best Supporting Actress award for Vyjayanthimala, which she refused to accept saying that Chandramukhi's role was as relevant to the film as Paro's. For Suchitra Sen, Bengal's renowned film star, it was the first Hindi film she acted in, and in that very first film she won critical acclaim. She brought Paro's egoism a defiance



and self respect.

Composer S.D.Burman and lyricist Sahir Ludhianvi came up with a memorable score for the film. Two 'Baul' songs were picturised on her 'Sajan ki ho gayee' and 'Aan milo shyam saawre' -where a little Paro misses a young Devdas.

Some beautiful numbers have been picturised on Vyjayanthimala as Chandramukhi- Mubarak Begum's 'Woh na aayenge palatke, unhein lakh hum bulayen' Lata Mangeshkar's- 'Ab aage teri marzi' and 'O jaane wale ruk jaa thodi dum, Jise tu kabool kar le woh ada kahan se laoon'. Apart from these, the songs- 'Manzil ki chah mein' sung by Rafi, 'O albele panchi' by Asha Bhonsle and Usha Mangeshkar, 'Saajan ki ho gayee' by Geeta Dutt and Manna Dey and 'Mitwa laagire" by Talat Mehmood, are memorable.

Devdas (2002) - the most expensive film to be made in Bollywood history, was released with a record 900 prints all over the world.

Costing more than $11m, this is the third celluloid take on Sarat Chandra Chatterjee's classic 1917, novel.
"Devdas has tirelessly lingered at the back of my mind," director Sanjay Leela Bhansali said.

"I thought it would be a fascinating challenge for

me as a director to present already known and loved character, in my very own way, with my perspective." Bhansali's film is a modern-day interpretation of the poignant love story of Devdas- played by actor Shahrukh Khan, who drunkenly pines after his childhood sweetheart while rebuffing the advances of a love struck courtesan.

Most of the film has been shot on lavishly built sets in Mumbai's film city-including a stained-glass Haveli which took over seven months to be erected, a gold staircase leading to a gold-pillar.

Each costume speaks of the painstaking research and flawless workmanship, promising to be a visual delight for today's film-goers and a prized possession for posterity.

An outfit designed by India's leading designers, Abu Jani and Sandeep Khosla, is the most talked about not just as an exquisite creation, but also for weighing over 16 kgs.

Devdas was the most challenging project that Bhansali and his actors have ever ventured though, comparisons are inevitable, especially with the filmmaker giving a contemporary feel to the classic love tragedy.

"I feel that the director should get the liberty of interpreting the novel the way he wants to." Bhansali said. *Devdas* was highly acclaimed at its premiere at Cannes. At

over $13million, Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Devdas* is clearly the most expensive Indian film ever made. From the very first shot, which shows a luxurious haveli at the turn of the last century in Bengal, it is clear that no expense has been spared.

From the first visual to the last, Devdas is a treat to the eyes - beautiful sets, lovely costumes, great lighting and dizzying camerawork.

Noted dancer Pandit Birju Maharaj's choreography leaves one spellbound. One couldn't have asked for more, but one feels that Bhansali's *Devdas* is packed with melodrama and exaggeration. Despite such excesses, the film manages to hold audience interest, largely due to the exquisite sets, costumes and classical dance, all captured exquisitely by Pradhan.

"It gave me a lot of scope to perform - from a flamboyant, young and larger-than-life character to a woman who loves her daughter very much."
- Kiran Kher

Glamorous Cannes

The Cannes film festival is the biggest, most prestigious film festival in the world. This is where film makers are discovered, where futures are made and the most important films premiered. Devdas was the first commercial film to be screened at Cannes. This film festival had so far restricted itself to select art house films.

The films' producers and overseas right owners, London based Eros Multimedia, had left nothing to chance to ensure that the screening succeeds. Shah Rukh Khan, or Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Devdas*, came for the screening, despite his serious back trouble. Aishwarya Rai, who plays Paro in the film, hogged all the limelight and basked in the attention showered on her by the French conspicuous by her absence at the screening was Madhuri, who plays the courtesan Chandramukhi, in the film.

Realising the importance of the right build up for the success of any screening, the Devdas team had gone about their job thoroughly. They had recruited a high profile publicity manager from London who closely watched a controlled everything that went out to the world on Devdas.

The stars were told to follow the schedule and

programme prepared by the publicist, who oversaw minutest details of what the Devdas team did or said either in the presence of the media or said either in the presence of the media or other showbiz personalities. The fortnight long effort paid off. There was a huge demand for passes for the films screening .

They seemed to have been helped by a newly aroused curiosity about the Indian film industry at Cannes, due to the tribute to Raj Kapoor, whose films-*Aag*, *Barsaat*, *Awaara*-were bring screened there. There was a lot of interest about Devdas in particular and Indian films in general at Cannes, something which had been amiss for the last several years. The premier was held at the Grand theatre Lumiere, the primary screen at Cannas at 10.30pm local time.

The first official screening of Devdas was held at Cannes. According to Sanjay when he first sat down to write the screenplay, the first thought that came to his mind was that Devdas was born on the day of a Lunar eclipse; By a strange co-incidence there was lunar eclipse on the evening of the film 'Devdas' world premier too.

On the day of the screening, the auditorium was packed with stars, filmmakers, distributors, and producers from all over the world. Shah Rukh Khan and Aishwarya

Rai arrived at the auditiorium in a carriage. Apart from them, Sanjay Leela Bhansali, along with his mother and sister Bela (who edits all his films), Shah Rukh's wife Gauri, Bharat Shah's son Rajiv, were present at the Cannes film festival. A delegation of Indian cinema including Yash Johar and Subhash Ghai, was also there at Cannes.

The international press, though not aware of the director, knew about Devdas, and hence there was a lot of curiosity about the film. According to Sanjay, Devdas was one of the most sought after films in at least the second-half of the Cannes film festival and there was a great enthusiasm about it. After the screening was over, there was a standing ovation for almost eight minutes.

Going by the reactions of the international press after the films premier at Cannes, it would appear as though Bhansali made a tremendous inter-national impact. According to time critic Richard Corliss "Reportedly the most expensive production in Indian history, it could well be the most ravishing movie ever. Its gorgeous gargantuan sets inebriate the eye---. In just his third feature, Bhansali seems a young master of the medium."

"I remember Sanjay had to continuously assuage my nerves while dubbing. I kept cribbing I paled in comparison with Kiron Kher's fabulous performance in our confrontation scene."

- Smita Jayakar

Sanjay - *A Promising Director*

The director of 'Khamoshi'-The musical' and 'Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam' Sanjay Leela Bhansali, has done it once again with his 'Devdas'. His latest release becomes the first commercial Hindi movie to be screened at Cannes film festival, the biggest, most prestigious film festival in the world.

Success has come quite early to the director who graduated from the institute with 70 mm dreams. His first concrete piece of work was a song in '1942-A love story' picturised on Manisha (pyar hua chupke se) then came his first film 'Khamoshi-The musical'.

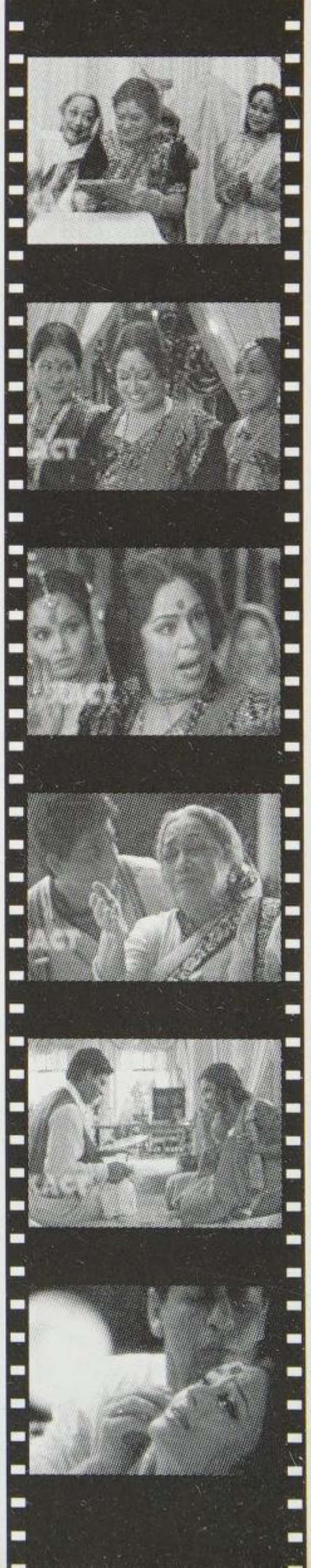
The director had started gaining ground with his first film itself. This second film 'Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam'starring Ajay Devgan, Salman Khan and Aishwarya Rai was also noticed outside India. It was screened in the Fukoka film festival of Japan. It is back in news as it is about to be released in sixty theatres in Japan and is being screened for the Japanese Parliament. Bhansali's efforts have come to be recognized once again internationally with his Devdas.The jury of Cannes film festival, which normally screens art oriented movies at the

festival, picked up this, very absorbing, but typically mumbai masala movie this time.

It has taken Bhansali almost two years to complete the film and a whooping five hundred million rupees. Such extravagance in both time and money can be expected from Bhansali, who is famous as a director, who can go any length to realize his dreams. Devdas was a dream too.

Bhansali asserts that the celluloid version of Sarat Chandra Chatterjee's novel is for him something more than just another film. He declares it to be his "tribute to" his "parent's love". It is not just an interpretation of a novel, it is a catharsis for him. The story of the novel as a whole and the various episodes independently, has stirred his emotions. They reminded him constantly of various events in his own life. Bhansali finds that the story has an inbred energy. It pulls at one's heartstrings. He has tried to translate that into celluloid after identifying with it at a personal level. He made Devdas hence, to give him peace.

An extremely devoted son, Bhansali, found the story of Devdas strikingly similar to the life of his mother and father. This association inspired him to make the film. "Devdas is the story of my father (Navin Bhansali) and mother (Leela Bhansali)", says Bhansali, adding, "The



starting point is when my father died of cirrhosis in the hospital". He adds further "My mother loved him immensely but she never realized that she was in love with this man who never expressed his feelings".

Bhansali expects that the film should touch viewers as it has touched him.

As a director, Bhansali is patient and focused. His these qualities were put to test during making of the film. One thing or the other kept him bothering throughout the previous two and a half years. Threats from the antisocial elements, arrest of film's financier Bharat Shah, lack of funds, the walking out of music composer Ismail Darbar when the music was still unfinished, the fall out between Jackie Shroff and Leela Bhansali, came in his way. To top it all, were his lead characters, Shah Rukh and Ashwariya's personnel problems. His colleagues praise him saying, that had someone else been there, he would have collapsed under pressure, but determined Sanjay overcame it all and produced a masterpiece.

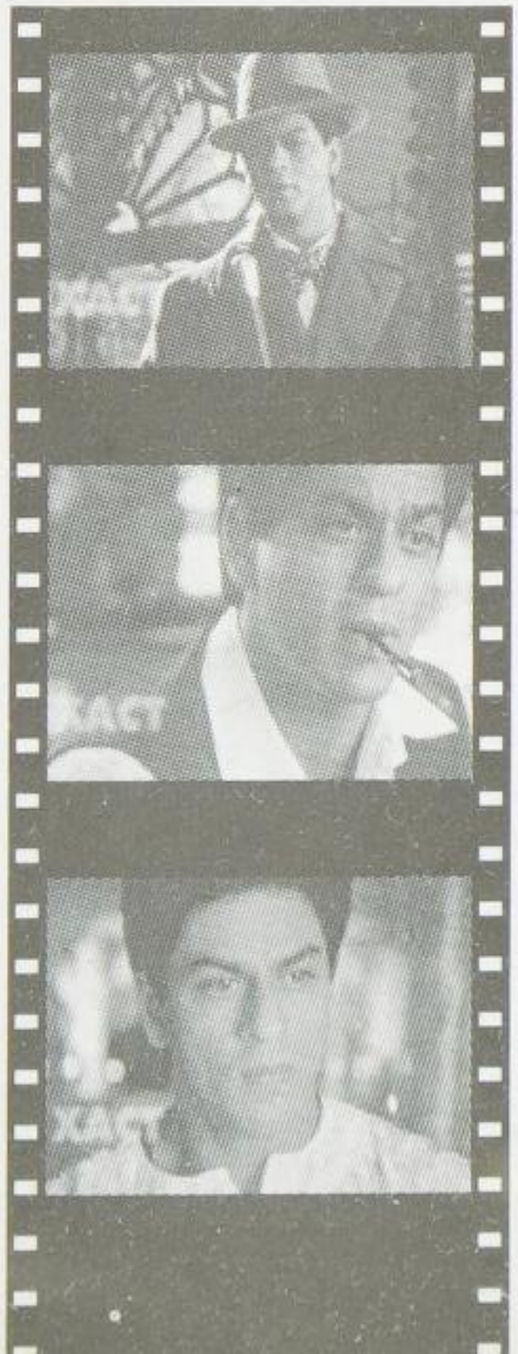
Bhansali is a passionate director. Every little bit of endeavor has to be done with perfection to satisfy him. He was likewise hugely involved with Devdas. He was in full command of the situation. He controlled what was

happening on the sets. He looked into every details of set up, costumes and continuity, colors on scenes the background and actors.

In keeping with the times he works in, Bhansali is also technically savvy. He spends a lot of time in making his film technically perfect, lighting being a special area of interest.

Bhansali has also proved to be an innovative director and a director who believes in taking risks. He is not scared of investing his time and money in experiments.In keeping with this spirit. He made a film on a classic by a classic author which has already been cinematized by heavyweights of twentieth century Indian Cinema. Bhansali has made a lot of changes in his adaptation of the classic novel by Sarat Chandra. On this he comments. "It is how I react to the novel. As a director, I have taken liberties, but they are not blasphemous."

Bhansali has now been recognized as a director with calibre, conviction, creativity, conscience and comradeship. Cinema freeks eagerly await his next endeavour.



Gorgeous Costumes & Dazzling Jewellery

The love, passion, hard work and commitment that went into designing of the clothes for this magnum opus, is clearly revealed by the grandeur created on the screen.

The 1930s and 1940s, old reference pictures, Bengali culture, traditional wear and a bit of research into the dress patterns of the time, together with one's imagination- these were the concepts behind the Devdas creations.

The dresses for Devdas, Chunnilal and Chandramukhi's characters were designed by the duo Abu Jani & Sandeep Khosla.

Devdas's Dress

The look of the 'just returned from Oxford' Devdas was achieved by sourcing vintage suits from old clothing stores in London and modifying the same to Shah Rukh Khan's size. His cravat, handkerchief, shoes all contribute to the English look of the time.

Devdas 'the alcoholic' was always dressed in off white, white or beige. Crisp Bengali *dhotis* teamed with

angavastras [long piece of cloth draped around the shoulders]; beautiful detailed *chikan* [traditional hand embroidery of Lucknow] *kurtas*, a shorter haircut giving him a nonchalant, toussled appearance, and minimal ornaments captured his look of the transformed rebel and dijected lover. Shah Rukh wanted to wear black, while Abu and Sandeep believed that Devdas was simply hurt in love and took it badly-they persisted with white as his look.

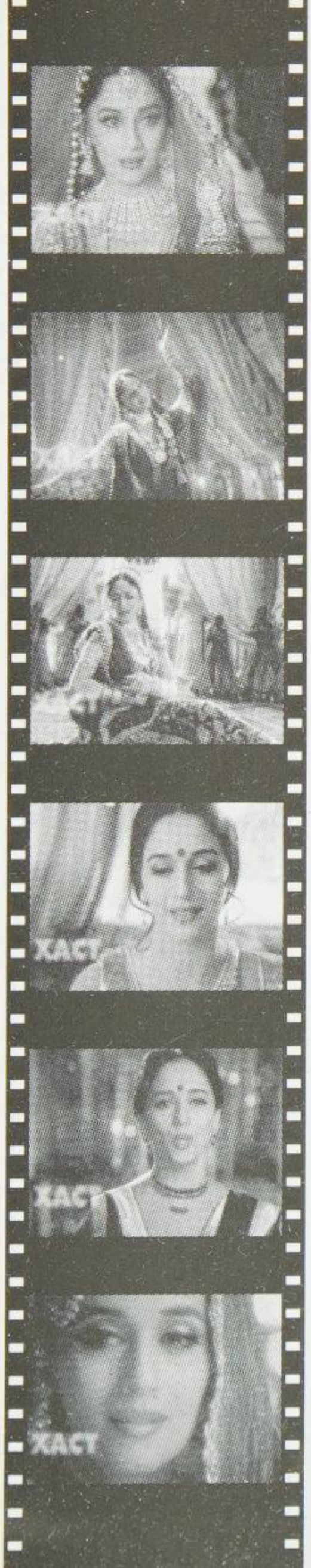
Chunnilal's Dress

The idea of the designer duo Abu-Sandeep was to give Jackie Shroff as Chunnilal, the pizzazz, confidence and flamboyance through his garb. He was always dressed stylishly in open collared *sherwani* over embroidered *kurtas* and crisp *dhotis*. A lot of details went into his accessories like rings and buttons.

To avoid having the ensembles look fresh and unworn, they were subjected to selective washing.

Chandramukhi's Dress

The courtesan Chandramukhi [played by Madhuri



Dixit] was draped in rich vibrant hues. Madhuri was dressed in exquisite benaras *saris*, brocades and silk *kurtas* teamed with beautiful transparent *dupattas* and embroidered blouses that were inspired by the 1930s and 1940s .

Chandramukhi at home was always shown in fine '*mulmul*' [fine, soft muslin] skirts and cotton skirts with gota work and ghungroos teamed with small embroidered *cholis*.

Incidently, the designer duo Abu and Sandeep had said that they were keen to shoot Madhuri in real jewellery, but abandoned the idea because of security hazards due to the long shooting. Instead, they settled for something that was as close to the real thing as possible with gold and *jadau*.

Chandramukhi was a devotee of Devdas, like Meera was a devotee of lord Krishna. Madhuri has never looked more enthrallingly beautiful than as the devoted, but unfulfilled courtesan.

Designer Neeta Lulla, was responsible for desigining the outfits of Aishwarya Rai, for her characterization of Paro, for Kiron Kher who plays her

mother, Smita Jaykar who plays Devdas's mother and Ananya Khare as Devadas's sister in law.

Talking about the research that was undertaken by her, for costume designing for the film Devdas, she reveals that they watched Bengali films based in Kolkata. They did a background study by speaking to locals in Kolkota. They picked up traits of women in traditional saris. Keeping in mind the basic draping and working within the parameters of the set pattern, Neeta created her own individual style and did a lot of mixing and matching. Sometimes two saris were combined into one, sometimes three. All the saris were eight to nine metres in length. Neeta also designed the jewellery for the film. The jewellery had an old world charm to it. The gold has not been given the cliched look, it is mostly matte. She also used *kundan*, garnet and art deco-jewellery, jewellery that suited the era.

In the outfits, she used filigrie, stones and even *kundan*. (Paro's wedding *sari* was a splendid red, maroon and pink shaded with heavy Kundan embellishment).
Sumitra, Kaushalya, and Kumud's costume

For Kiron Kher as Paro's mother, Neeta has used '*Dhakais*'. For Smita Jaykar, who played Devdas's mother,

she used *Valkalams* (a traditional print). And for Ananya Khare who essayed the role of Devdas's sister-in-law in the film, she used only Benarasis. She says she sought inspiration from what was being imported by India in that era from China and Persia. The clothes evoke a Calcutta that was a pot-pourri of cross-cultural exchanges. While Britain was importing and exporting fabrics from India, India was already trading with China and Iran.

The drape and accessorizing was typically Bengali and 'imported' weaves and motifs, besides '*Zardosi*', '*garo*'. Shadow work, Chinese Satin stich embroidery and Chinese motifs, were used. Instead of *Dhakai* Muslin which is stiff, Neeta used *Benarsi* net for its sheerness and cotton for its mattelook. She dyed and shaded the saris to the colours she wanted. They created the same impact as Dhakai Muslin.

Paro's Costume

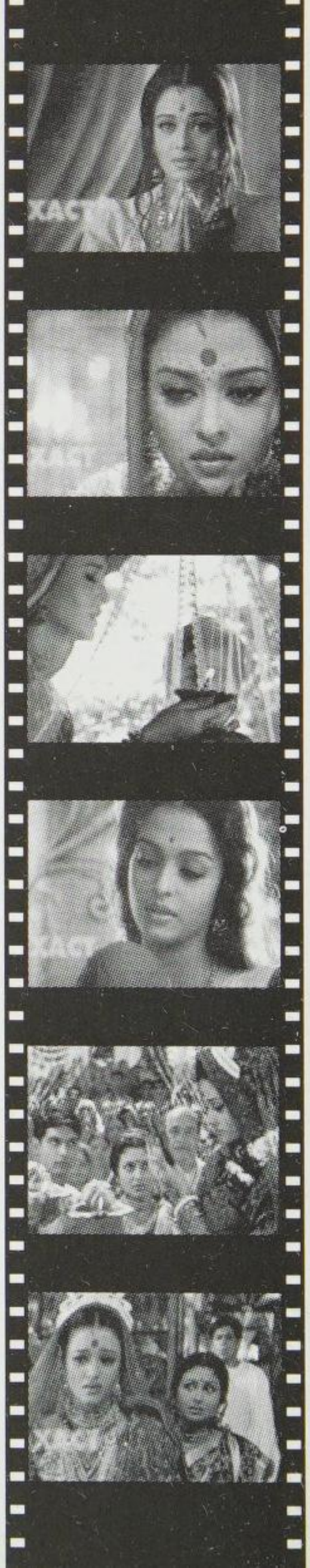
A rose- pink Benarsi net sari with shadow work, sums up Paro's look of the first half of the movie. Paro's youthfulness and vibrancy is emphasized through the look. A blouseless sari look is chosen for a young Paro. A

ten metre long black and gold saree embodies the mature, sober styling of the married Paro that complements the mood of the second half of the movie.

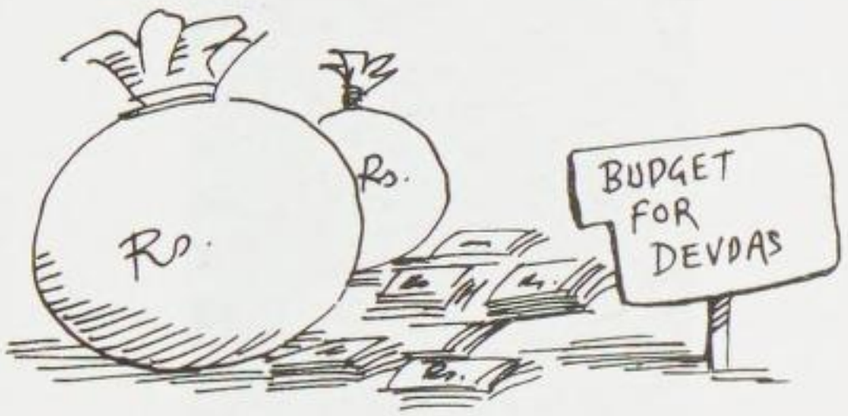
Neeta has special memories of the outfit that Aish wore for the climax scene of the movie, when Paro hears about the dying Devdas just as she has finished her 'puja'.

Neeta designed a ten metre long red and white Dhakai Muslin sari, whose borders were lightly embroidered and matched the work on the blouse The day before the scheduled shoot, Sanjay on scrutinizing Aishwarya in the outfit, declared that something was missing in it-"that little gloss. I want my Paro to look resplendent when she runs, her sari must shimmer and flow in the wind."

Neeta, searched and worked all through that night, even tried calling Kiron Kher, Jaya Bachchan and Rani Mukerjee's mother- asking for their Puja saris, and after many urgent calls to her suppliers and meetings with her masters and '*Kaarigers*', she got two saris and three blouses ready by 9.30 A.M the next day. Sanjay just loved them.



The Big Budget of Devdas



The so called film industry Bollywood is surprised to see 'Devdas' - the most expensive film to be made. It was released with a record 900 prints all over the world. Bharat Shah the renowned diamond merchant invested 50 crores of rupees to make his film a name in the Indian cinema. At rupees 500 million, Bhansali's 'Devdas' has been an obsession for the last two years.

Financial support was given by the banks like Vaishya Bank, ICICI and Global Trust Bank. The financier was Bharat Shah. It was not an easy task to create the Calcutta of the early twentieth century and to set up a place where Chandramukhi the golden hearted prostitute lived in. But Bhansali's effort with a huge amount of money made the impossible possible. Most of the film has been shot on lavishly built sets in Mumbai's film city- including a stained glass *Haveli* which took over seven months to be created, a gold staircase leading to a gold-pillared courtesan's chamber and a house with 180 pillars.

The whole movie speaks about the grandeur and dazzling setting. Bhansali says, "I felt this had to be made with an opulence and grandeur that would do justice to its beautiful subject and character." Previously neither Bimal

Roy nor P.C. Baruah dared to invest such an amount on 'Devdas'. Bhansali in remaking the movie took such a risk. Each costume speaks of the painstaking research and flawless workmanship, promising to be a visual delight for today's film goers and a prized possession for posterity.

The reason behind such a budget is that the '*havelis*' of early twentieth century, the set, the costumes were difficult to create and were expensive. His artistic sensibility goes parallel with a financier's hand.

"This is not a breezy love story, so it walks a thin line between looking glamorous and pretty. What I added to Devdas was a lot of colour to made it rich as well as a lot of intricate detailing."

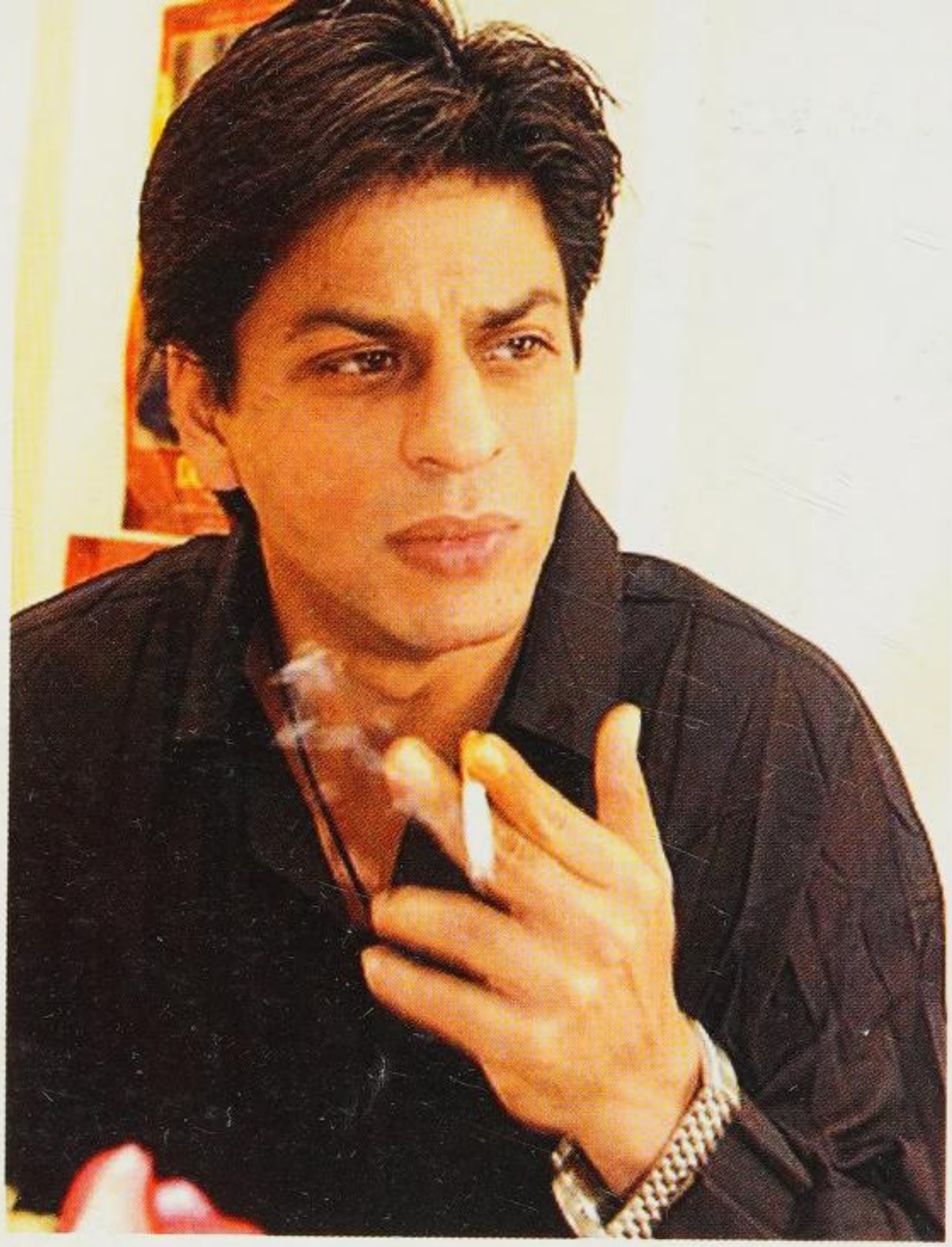
- Binod Pradhan

"We worked hard at the time; we did our best. I am sure the present set of talented people have done their best. Perhaps there are differences in style. But I do not think there is a need to discuss that; needless comparisons are unhealthy."

- Dilip Kumar

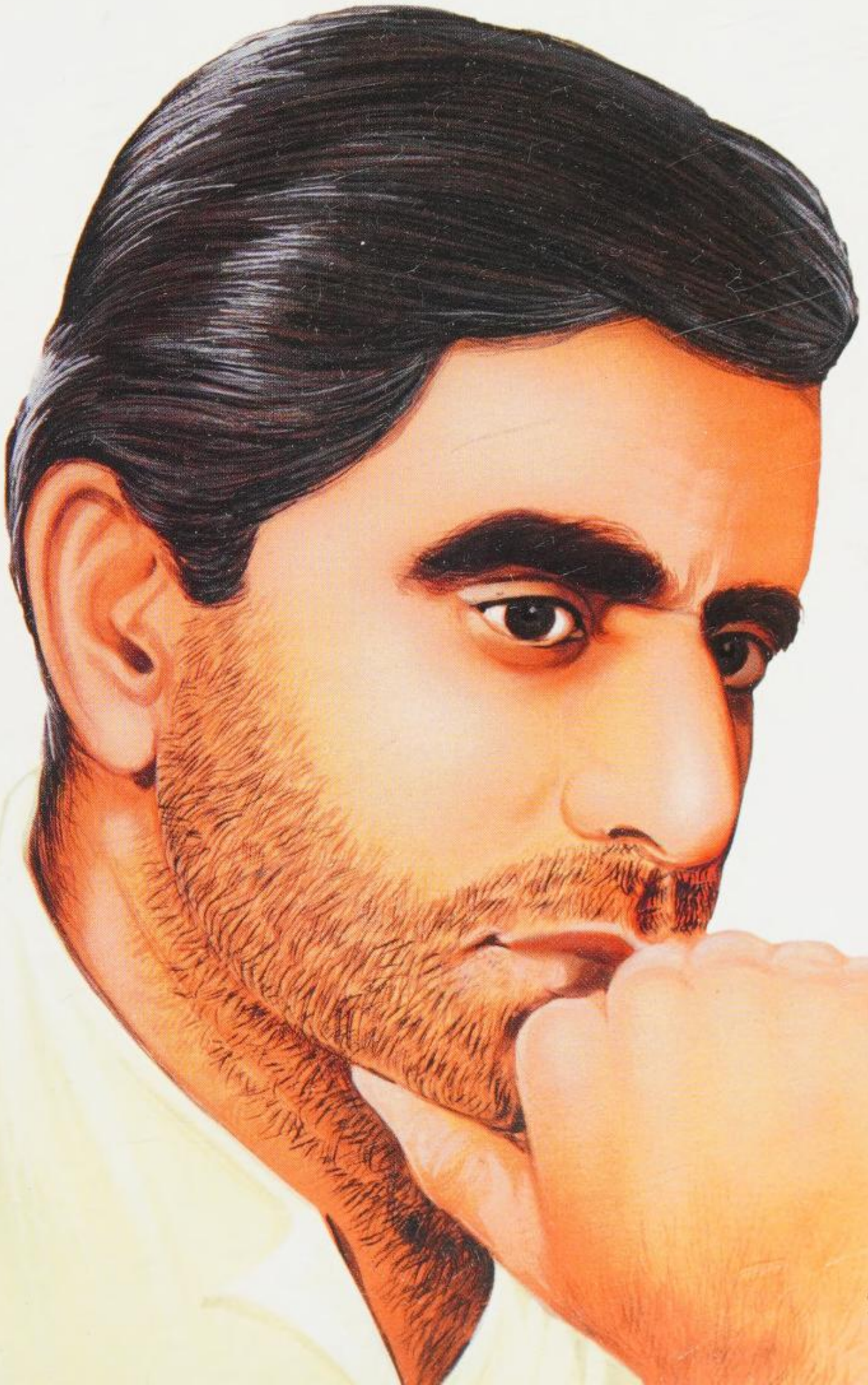
Sarat Chandra Chhatopadhaya Creator of 1917's Devdas

Devdas & Paro in New york



The Eternal Saga of Love : Devdas

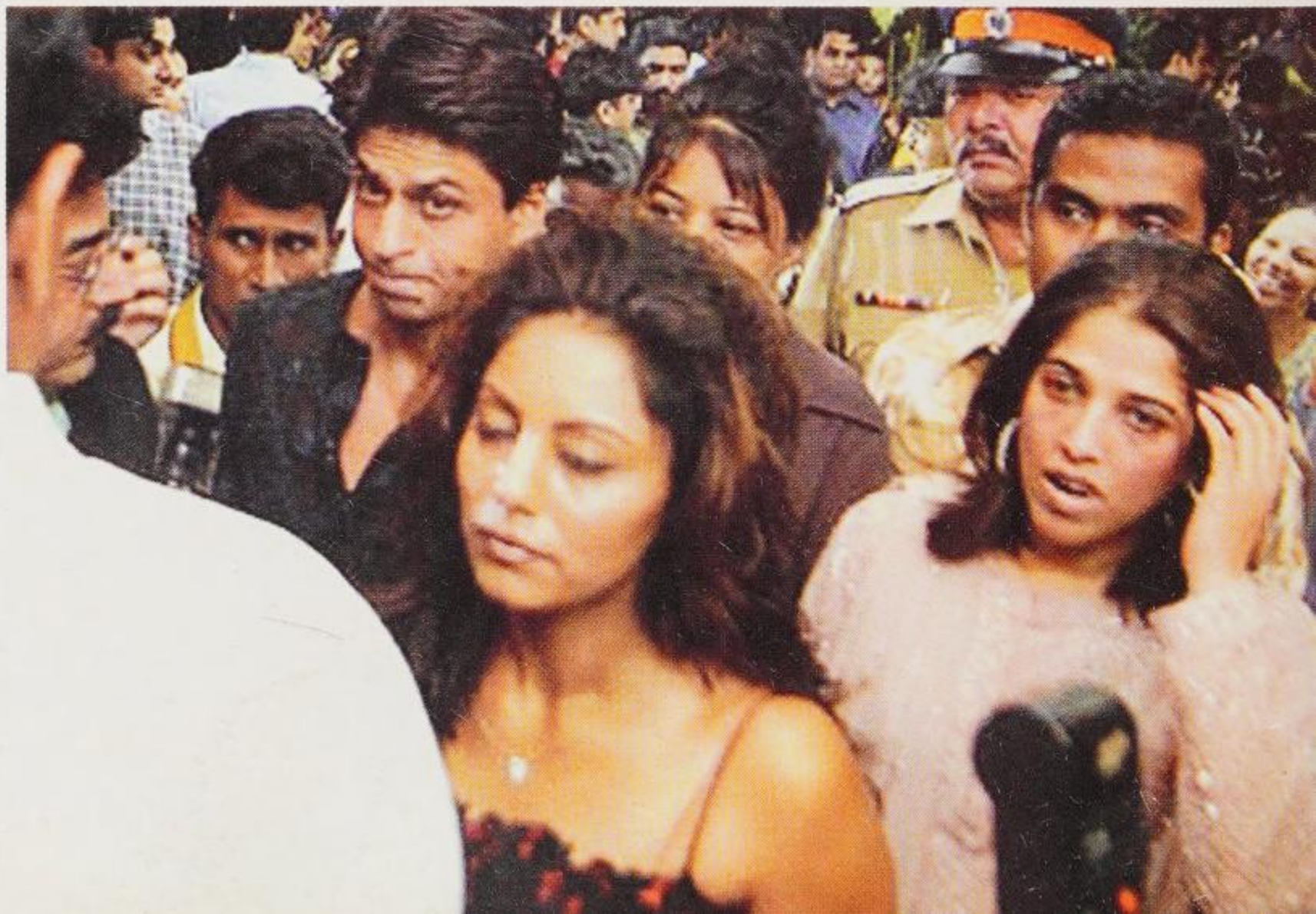
Dilip Kumar 'Yusuf in 1955's Devdas



The Eternal Saga of Love : Devdas

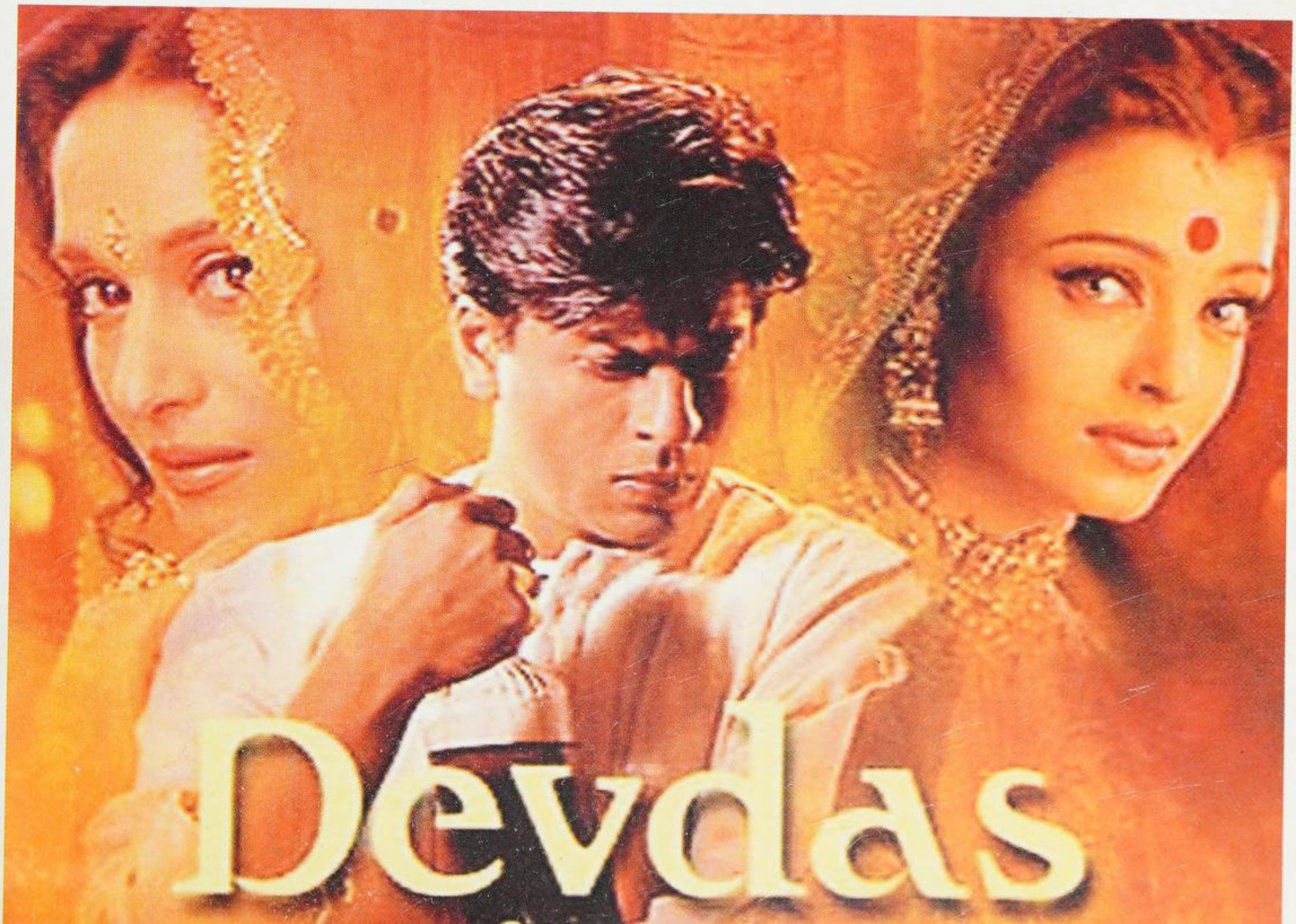
Sanjay Leela Bhansali With Mother

Shahrukh Khan at entrance

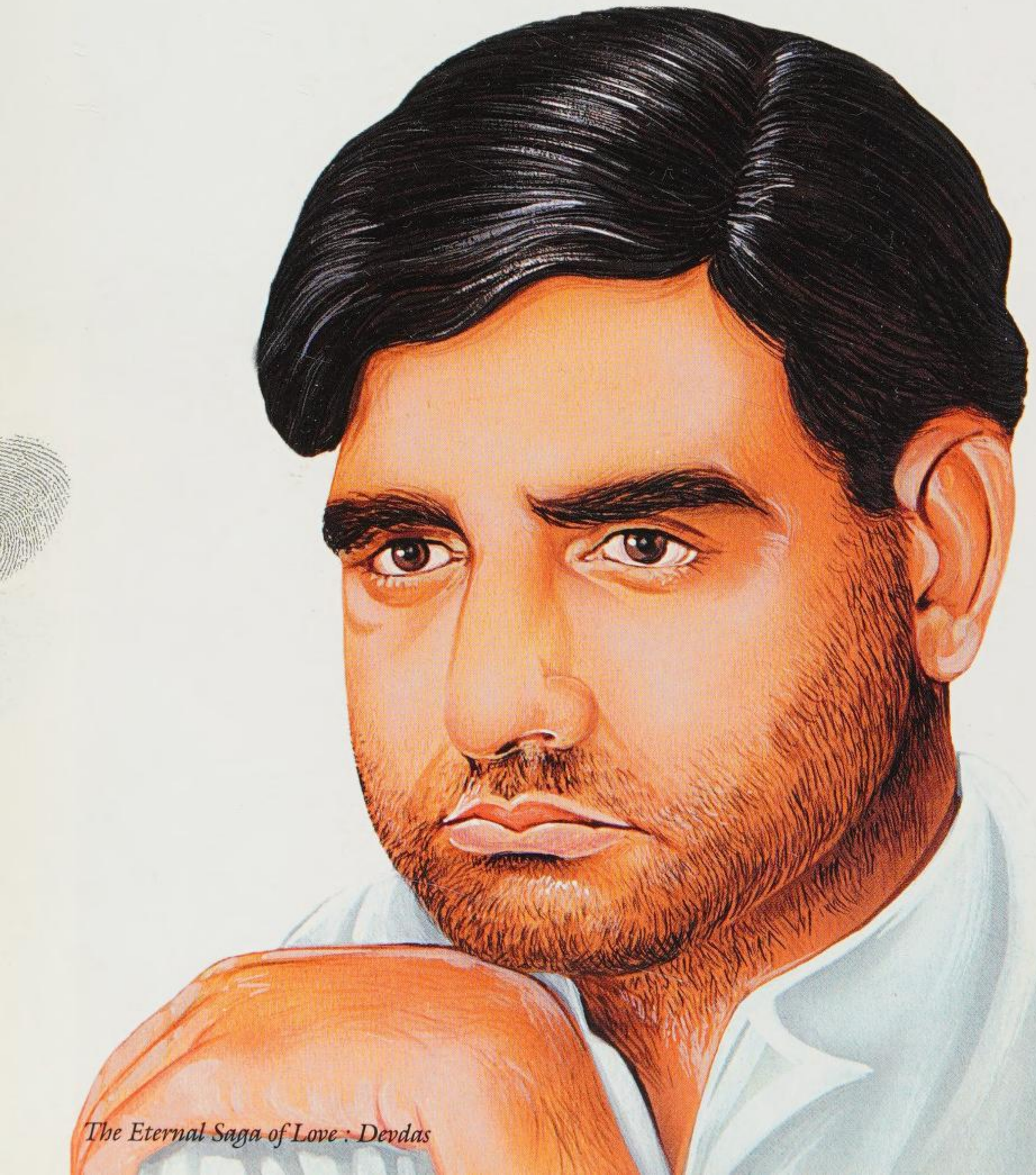


The Eternal Saga of Love : Devdas

Different Faces of Devdas

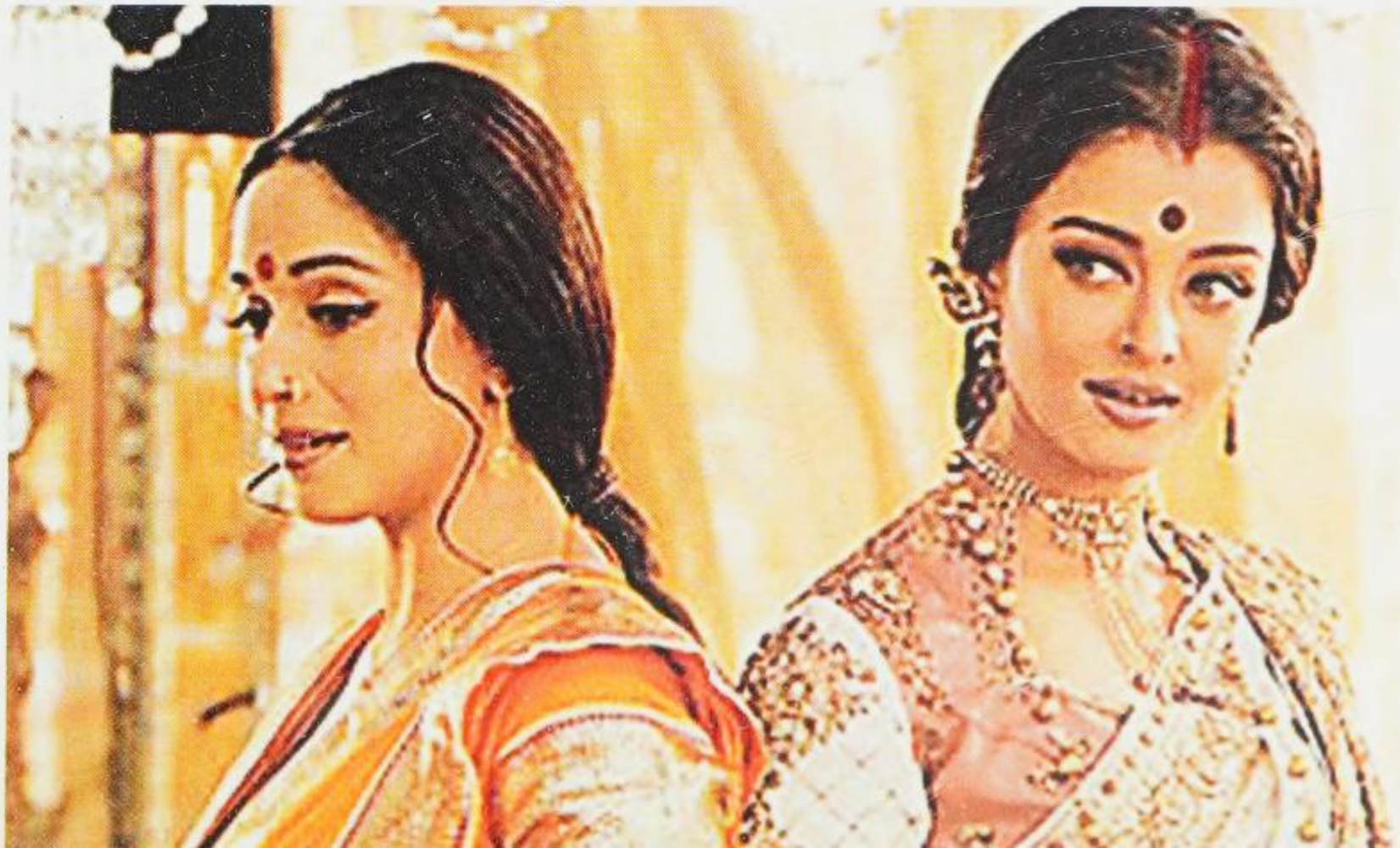


K.L. Saigal in 1935's Devdas



The Eternal Saga of Love : Devdas

Devdas of New Millennium



ja of Love : Devdas

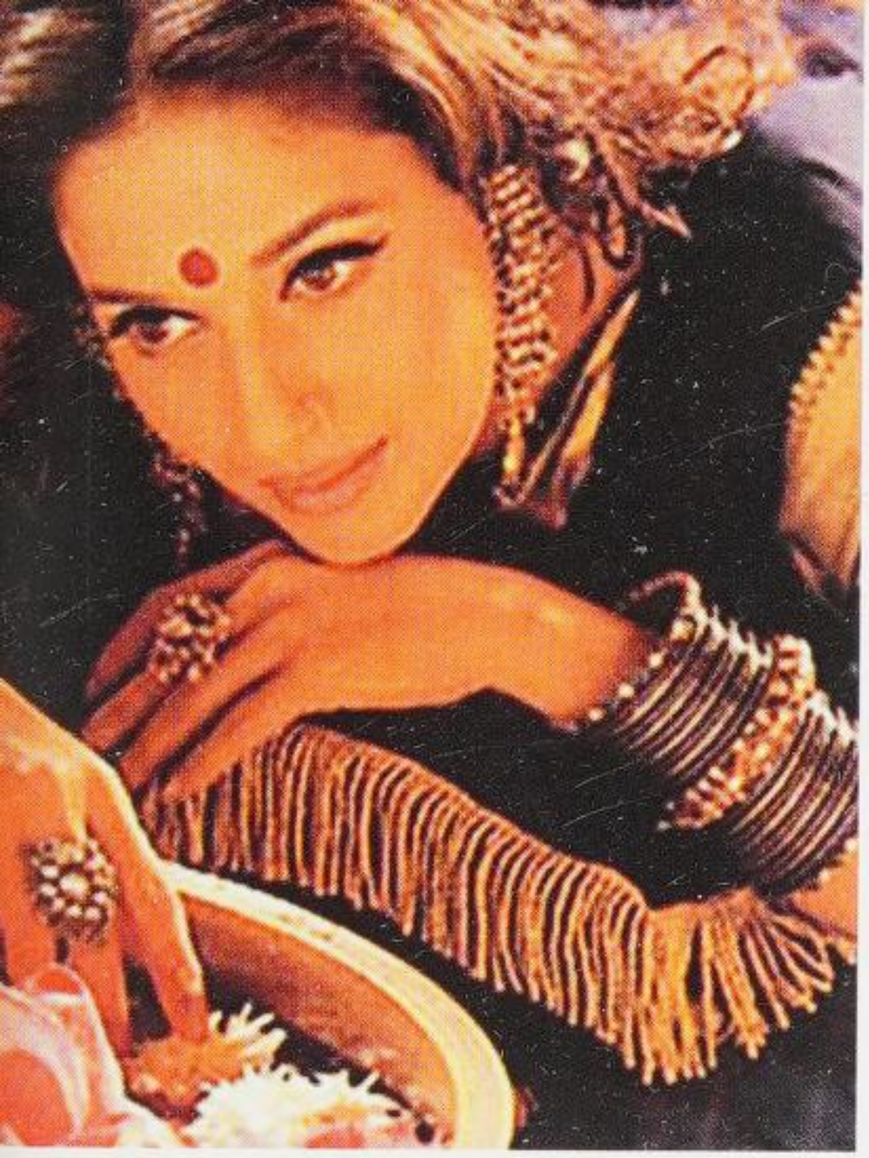
Shahrukh Khan
in 2002's Devdas

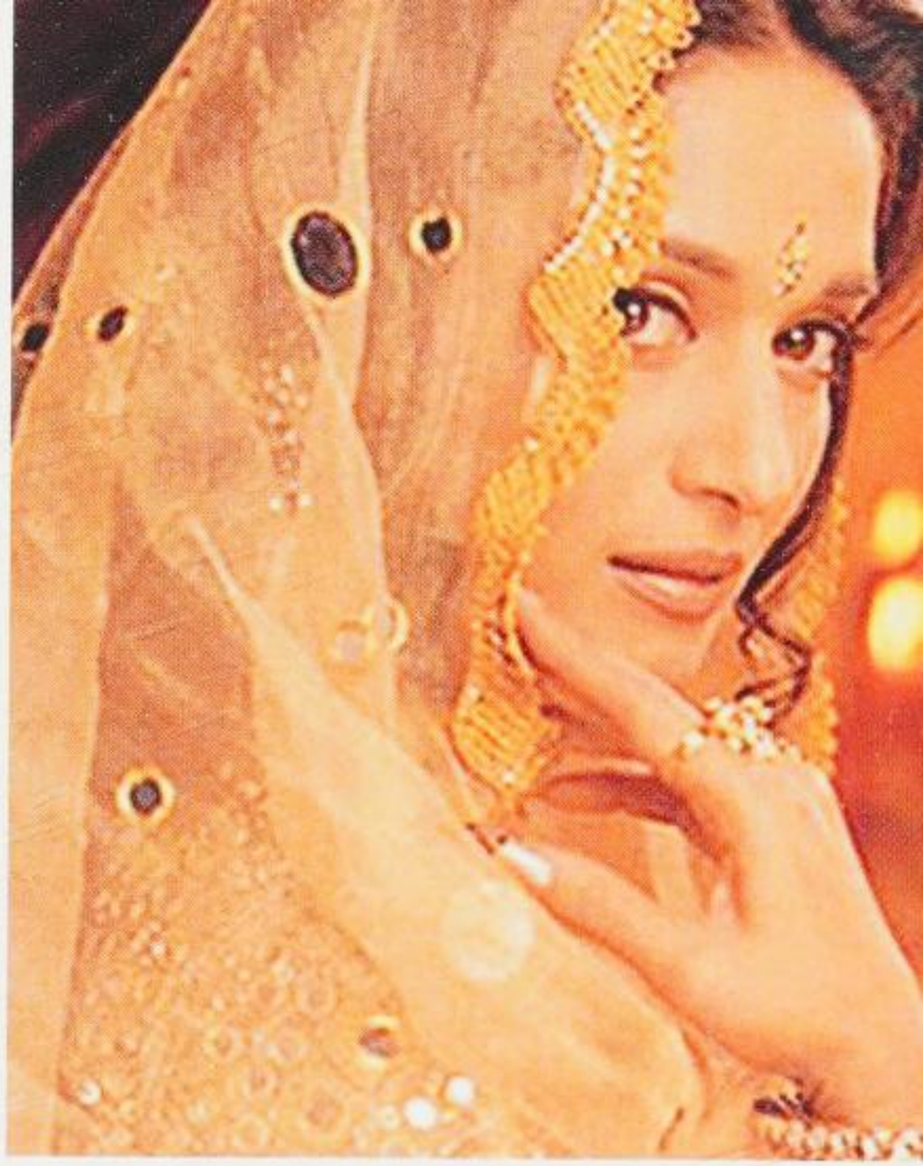
Shahrukh in Devdas

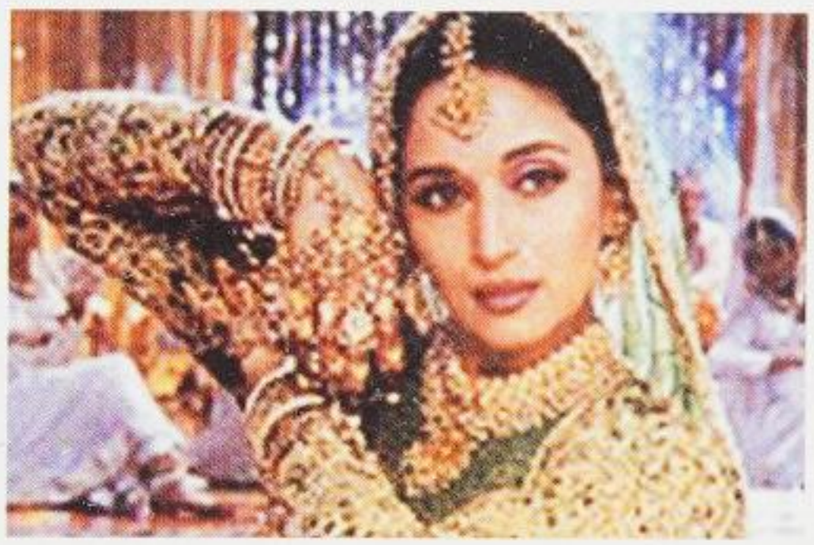
The Eternal Saga of Love : Devdas

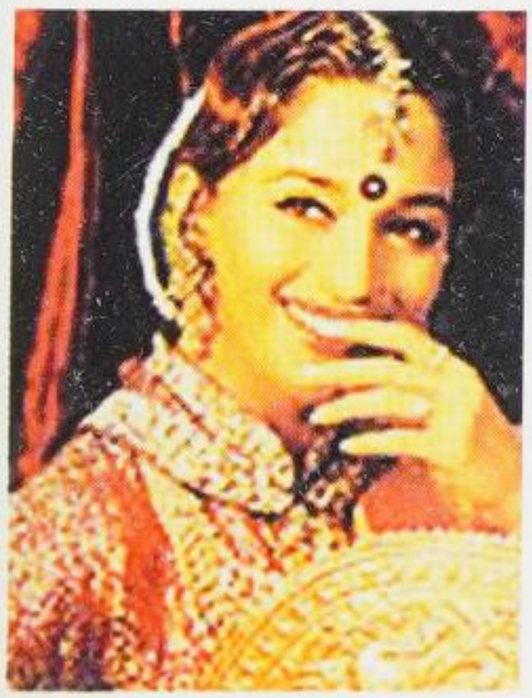
Devdas of Two Decades

The Eternal Saga of Love : Devdas

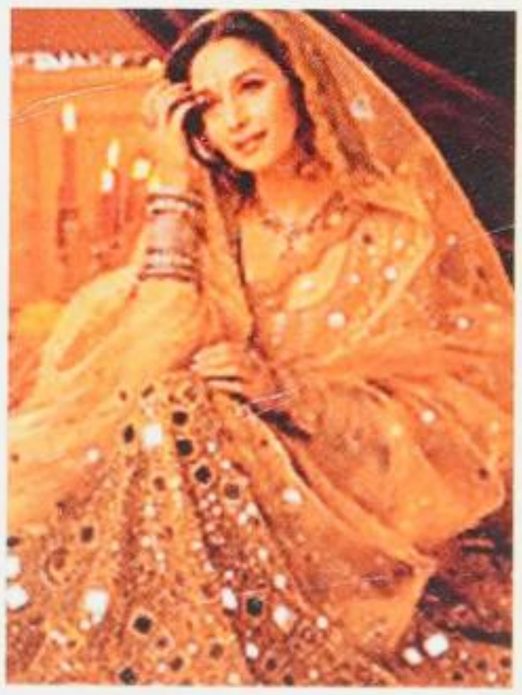






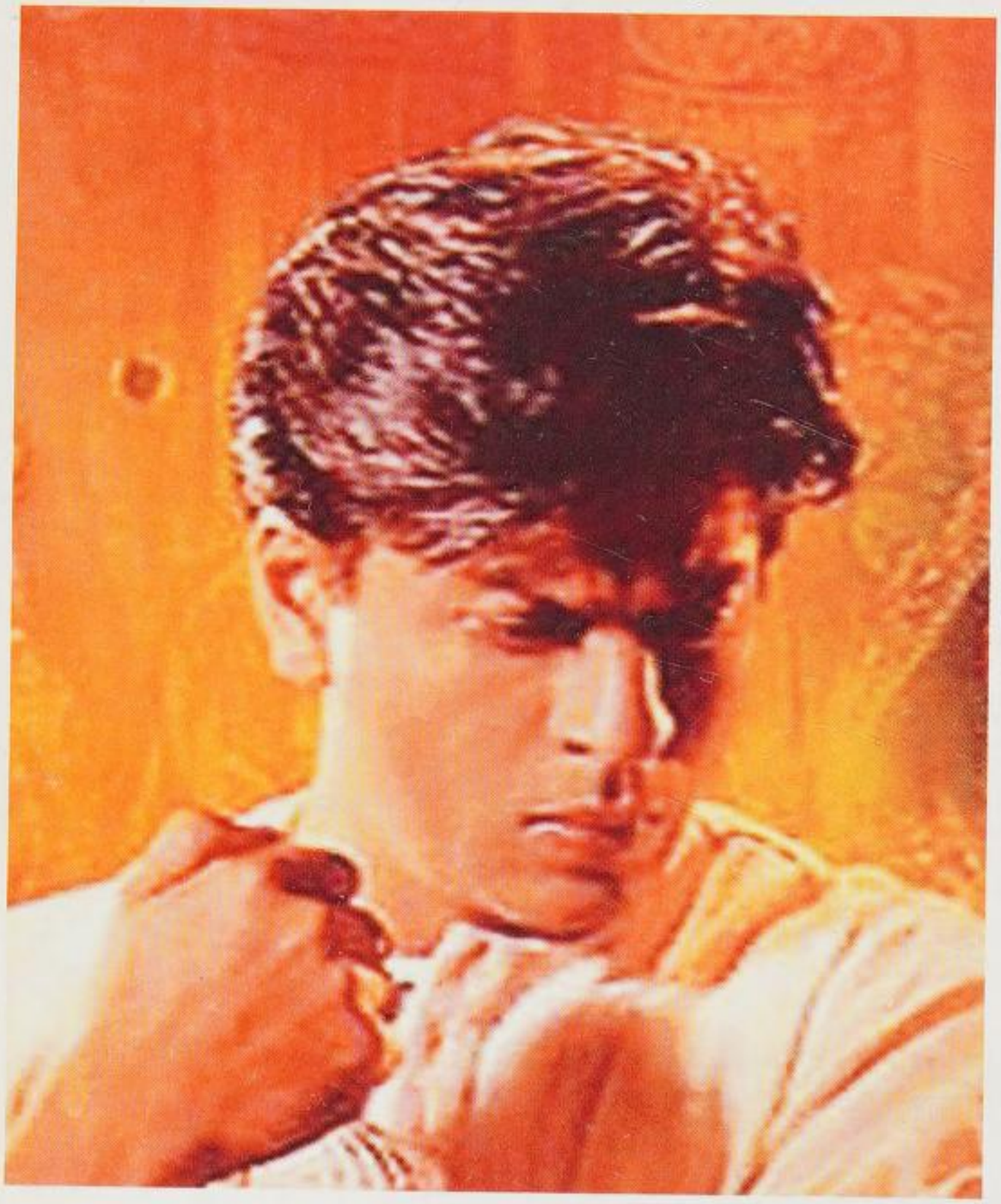


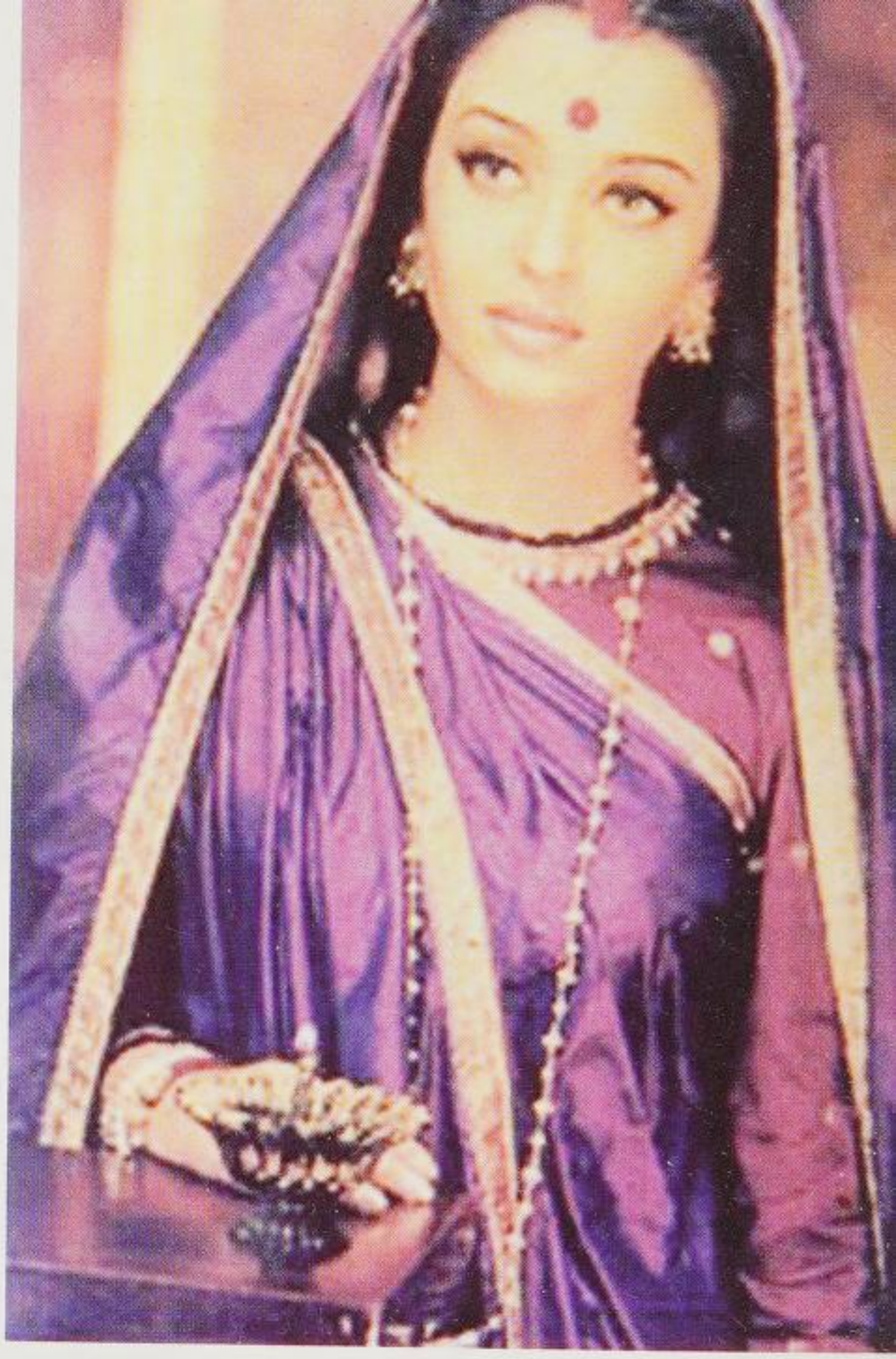
Mrs. Nene in Devdas



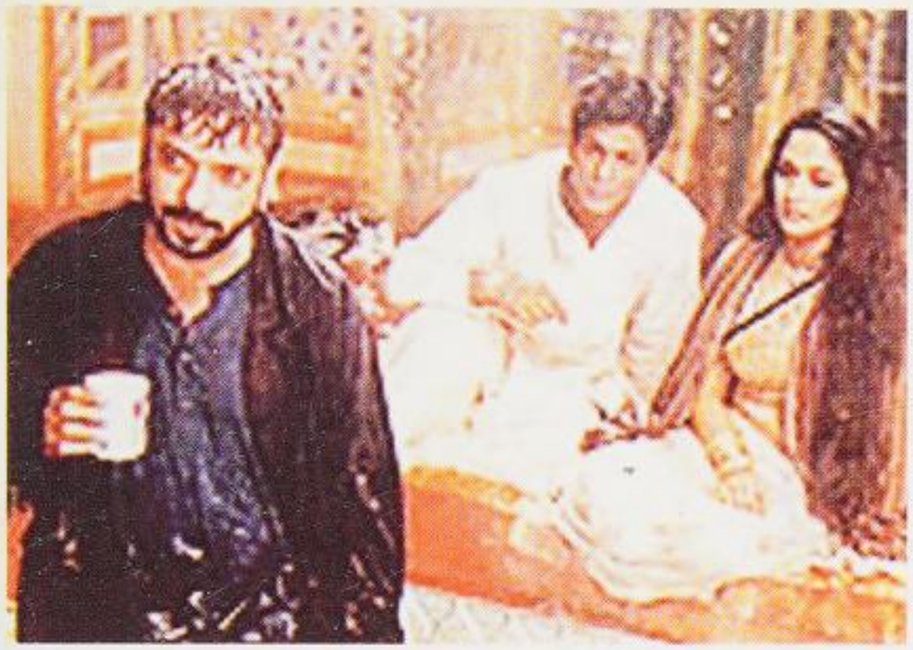
The Eternal Saga of Love : Devdas

Pillars of Devdas

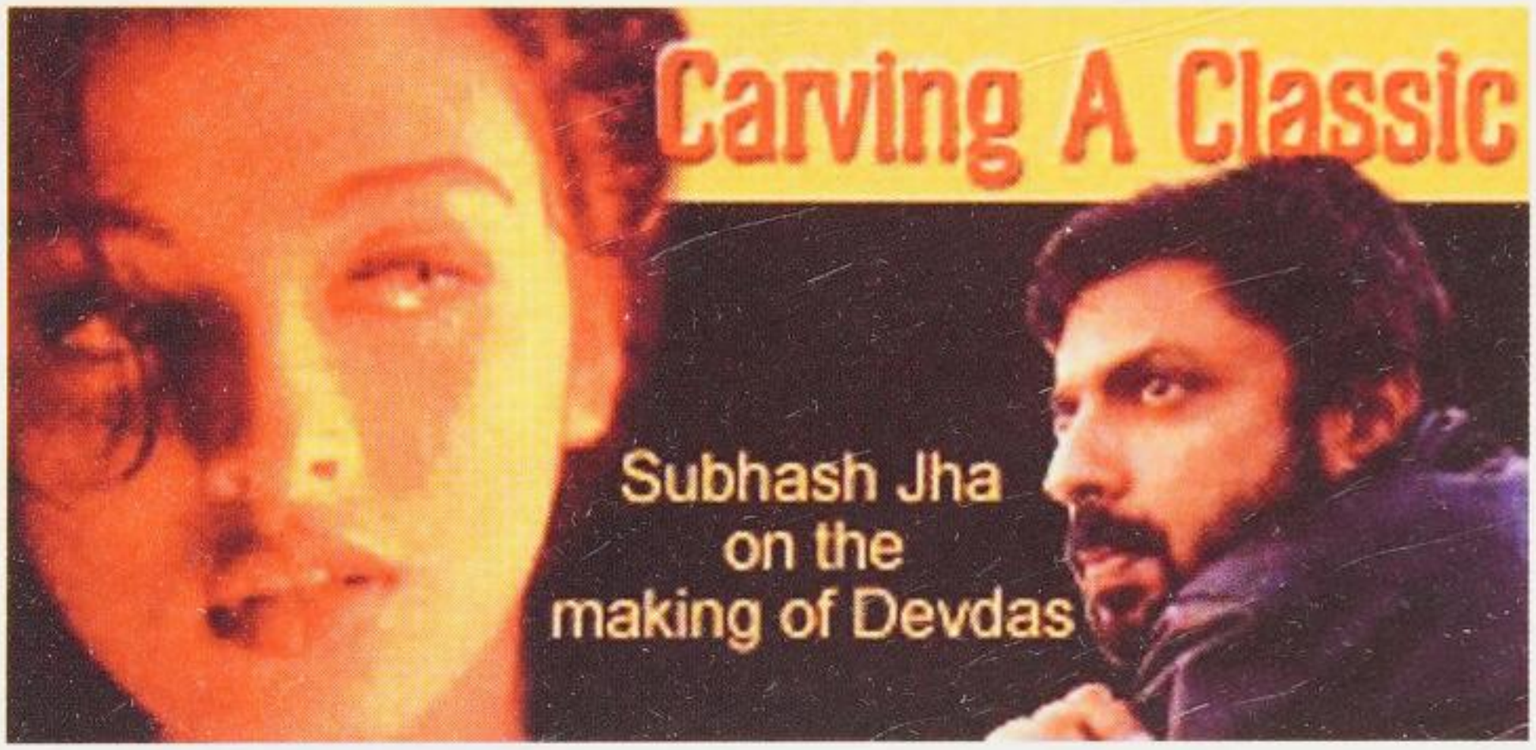




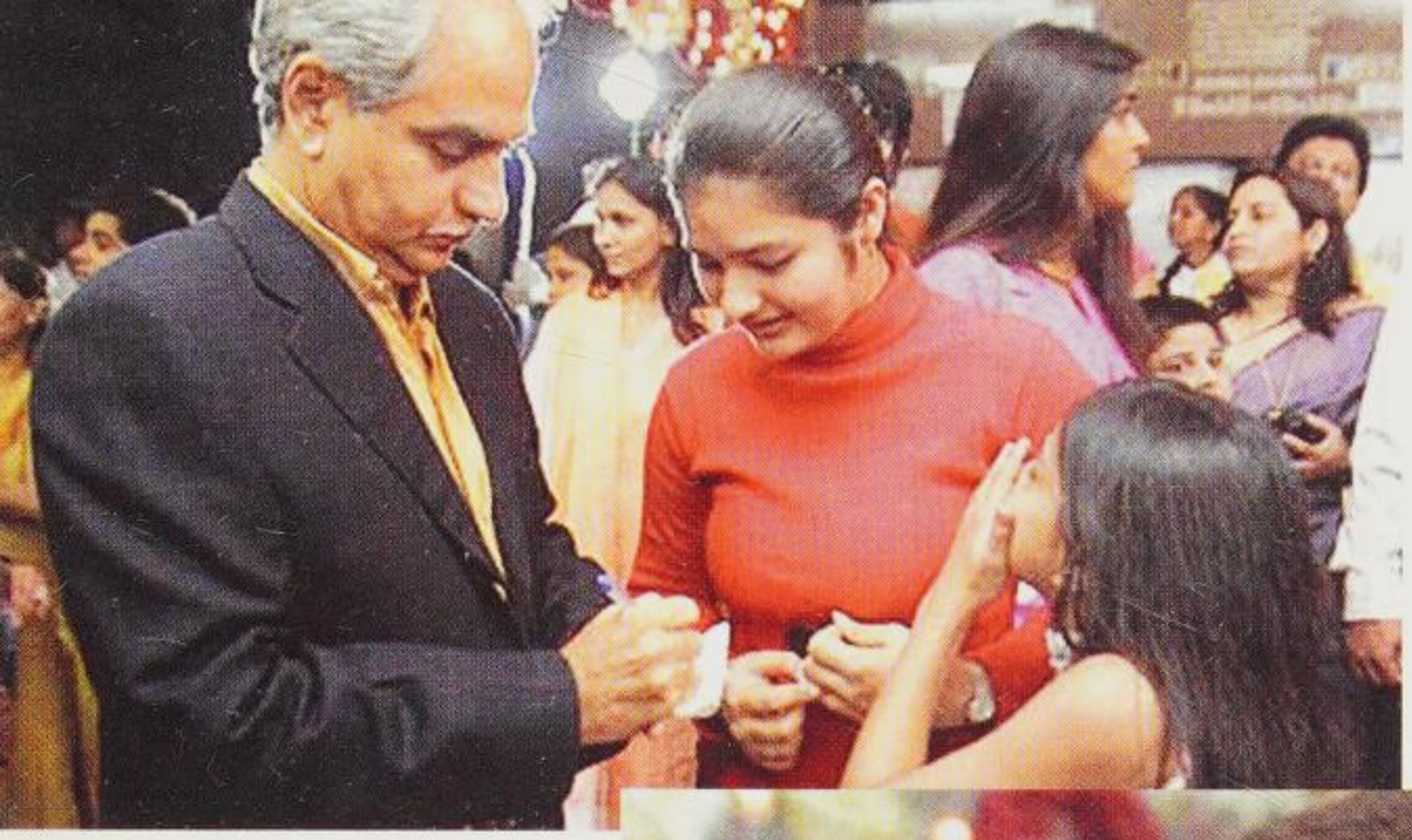
The Eternal Saga



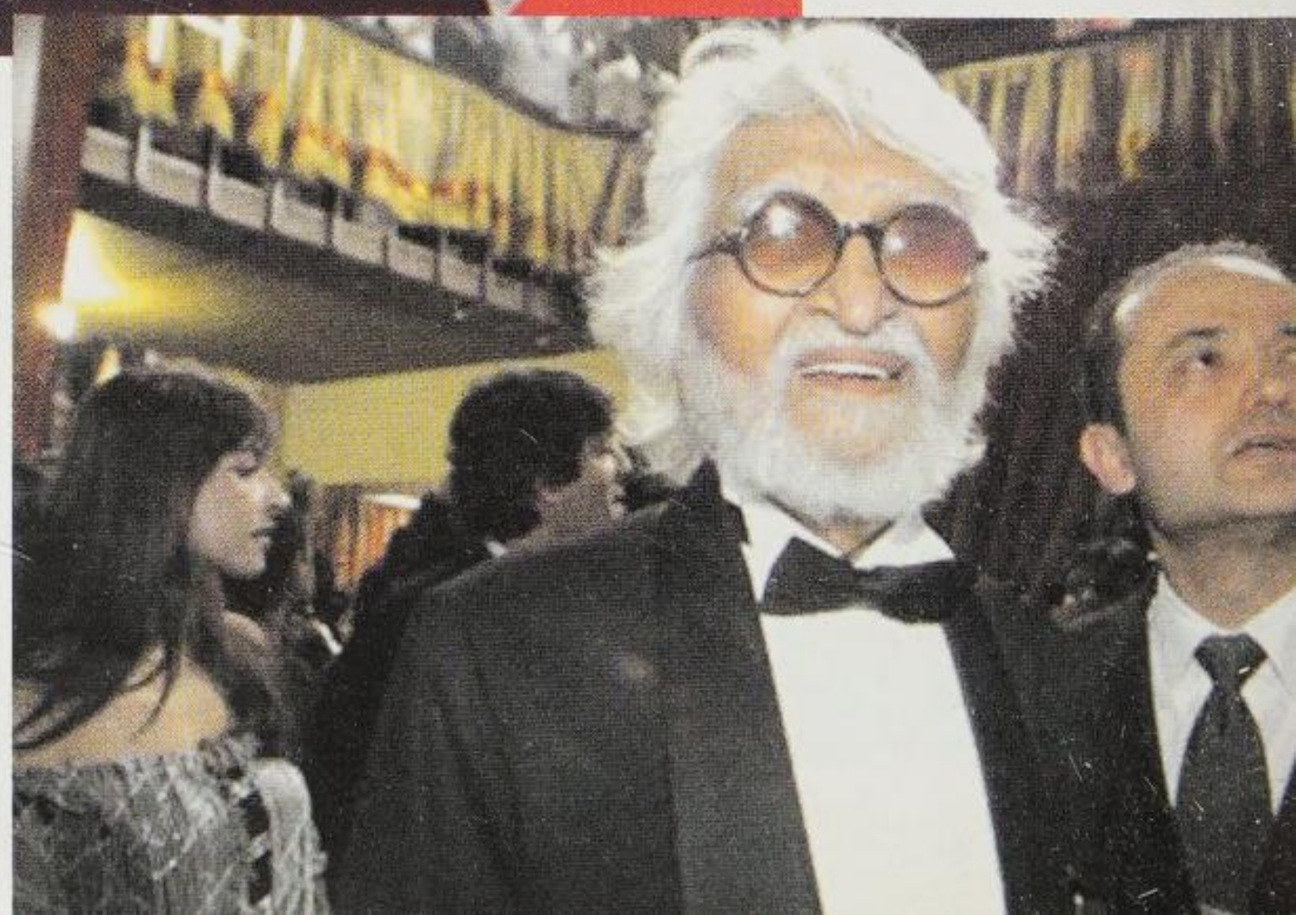
Bhansali's hard working



The Eternal Saga of Love : Devdas



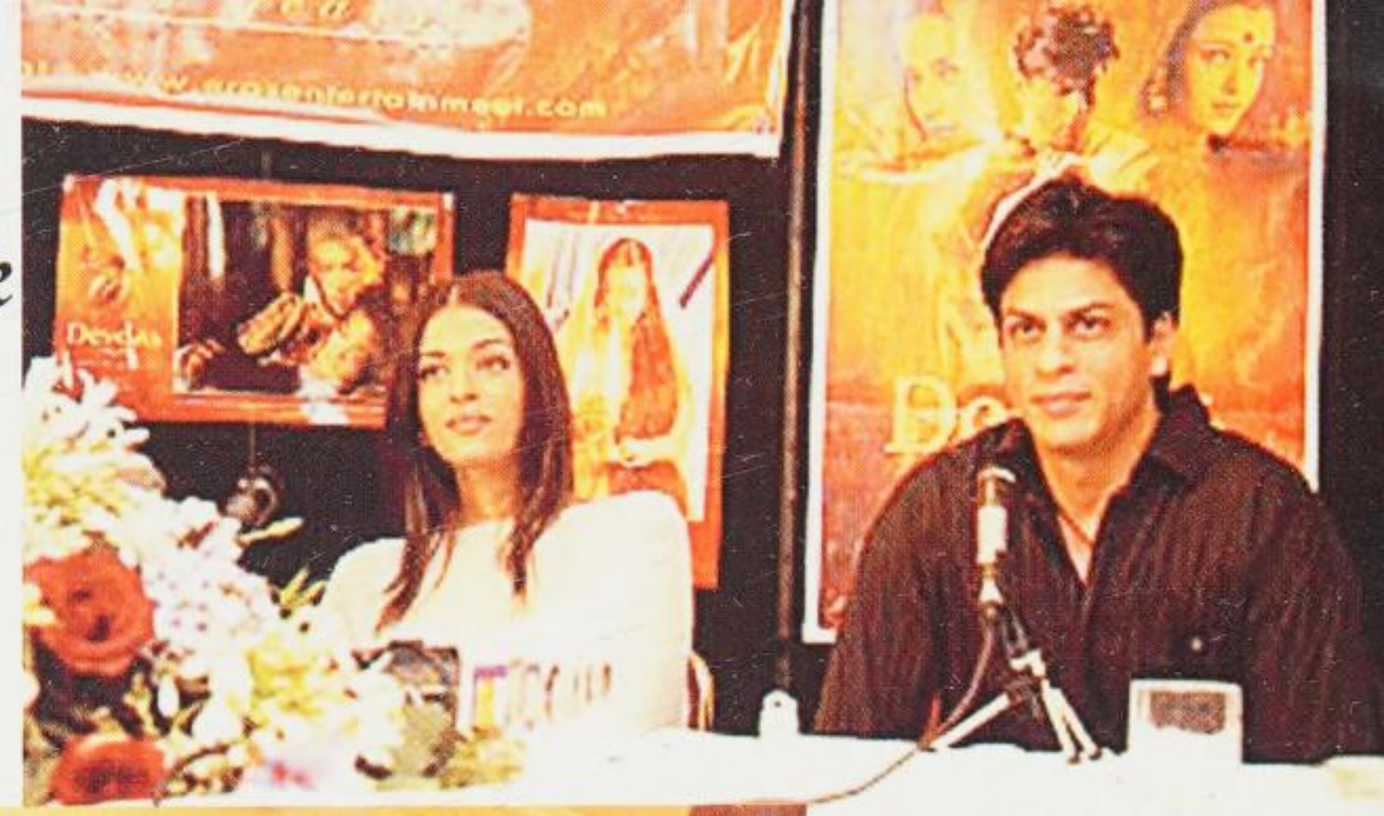
Another Great Director

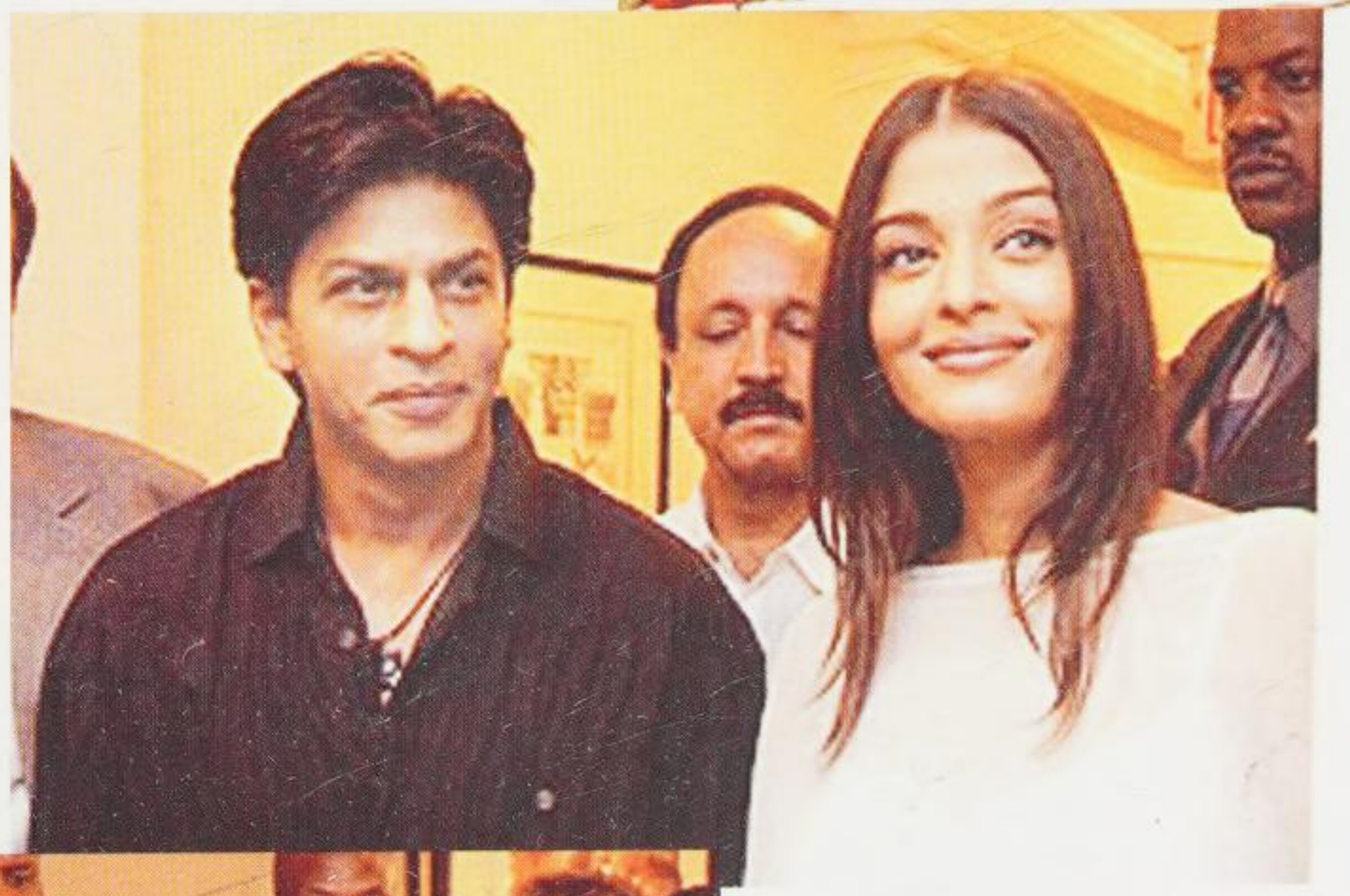


M.F. Hussain

The Eternal Saga of Love : Devdas

Devdas & Paro in a Press Conference in New york





Mahesh Bhatt & Pooja Bhatt

Feroz Khan

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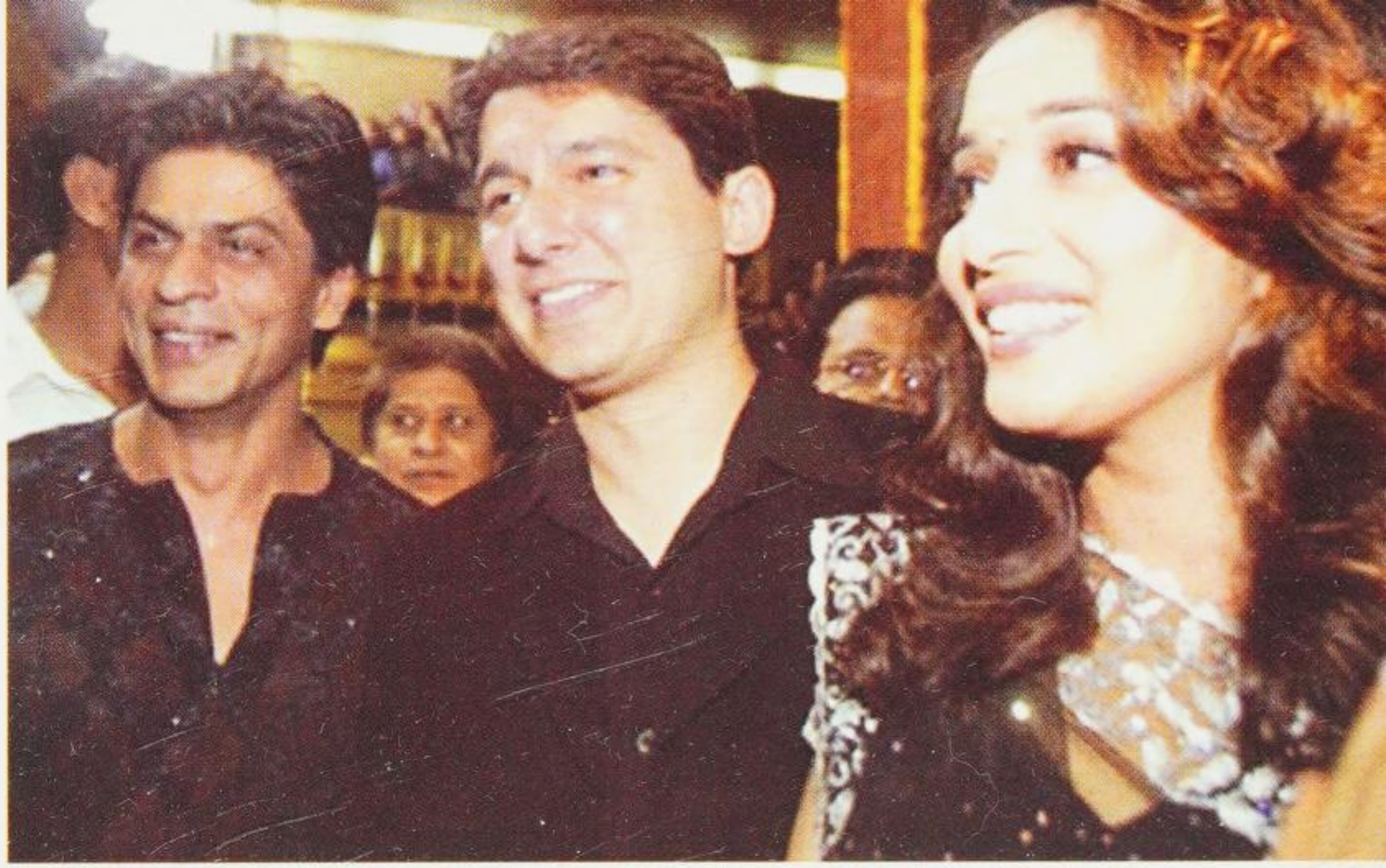
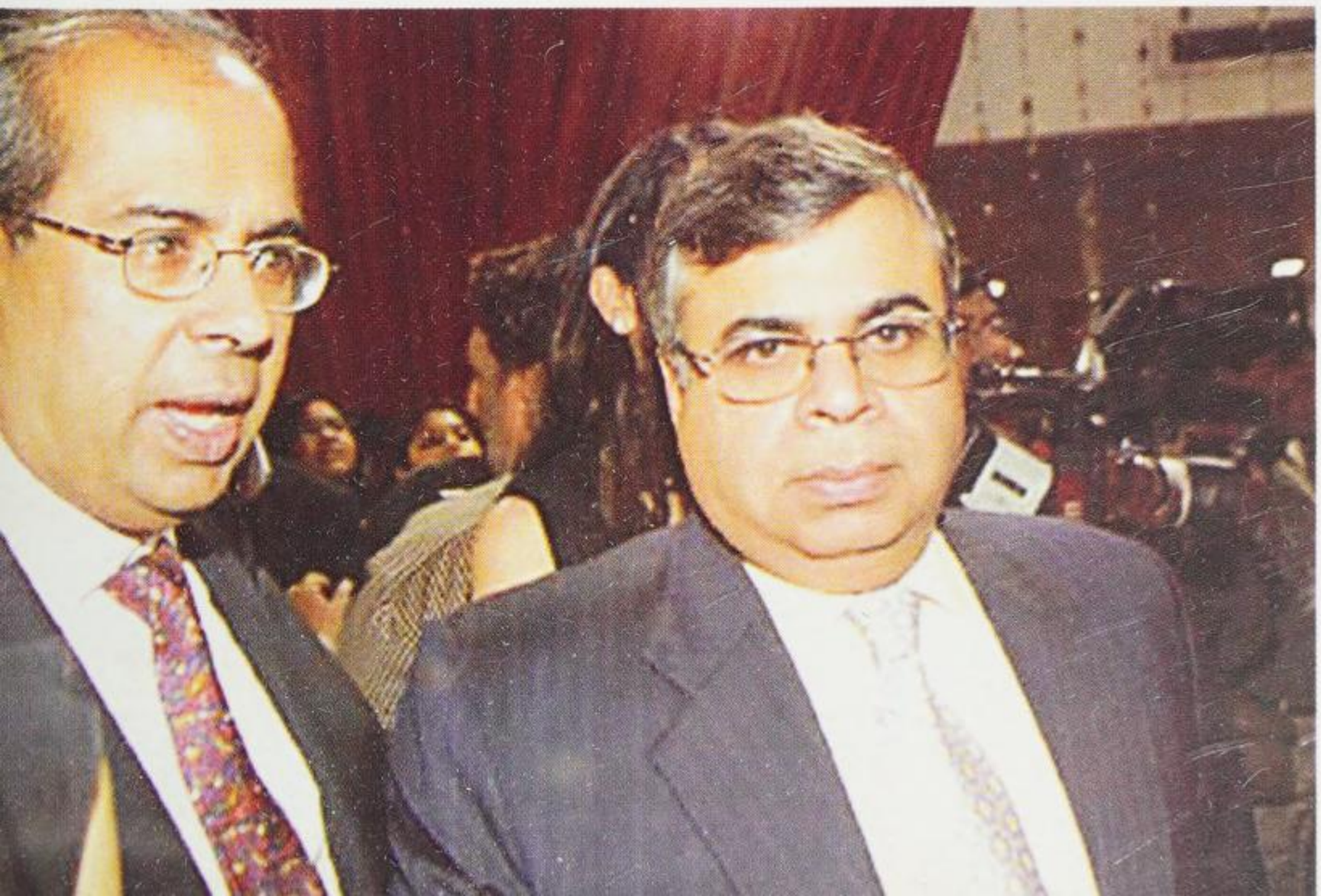
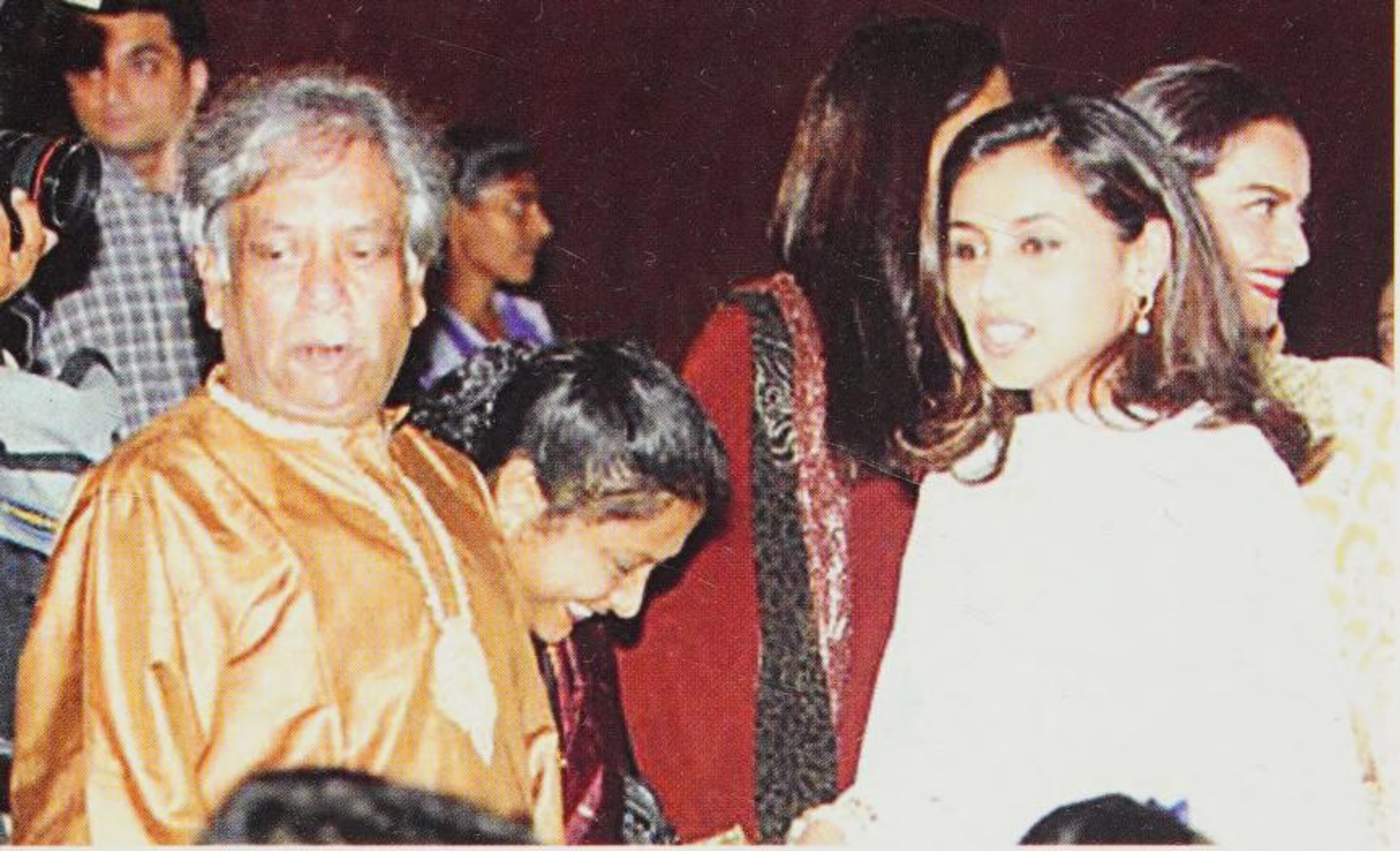


Mr. & Mrs. Nene with Shahrukh Khan alone

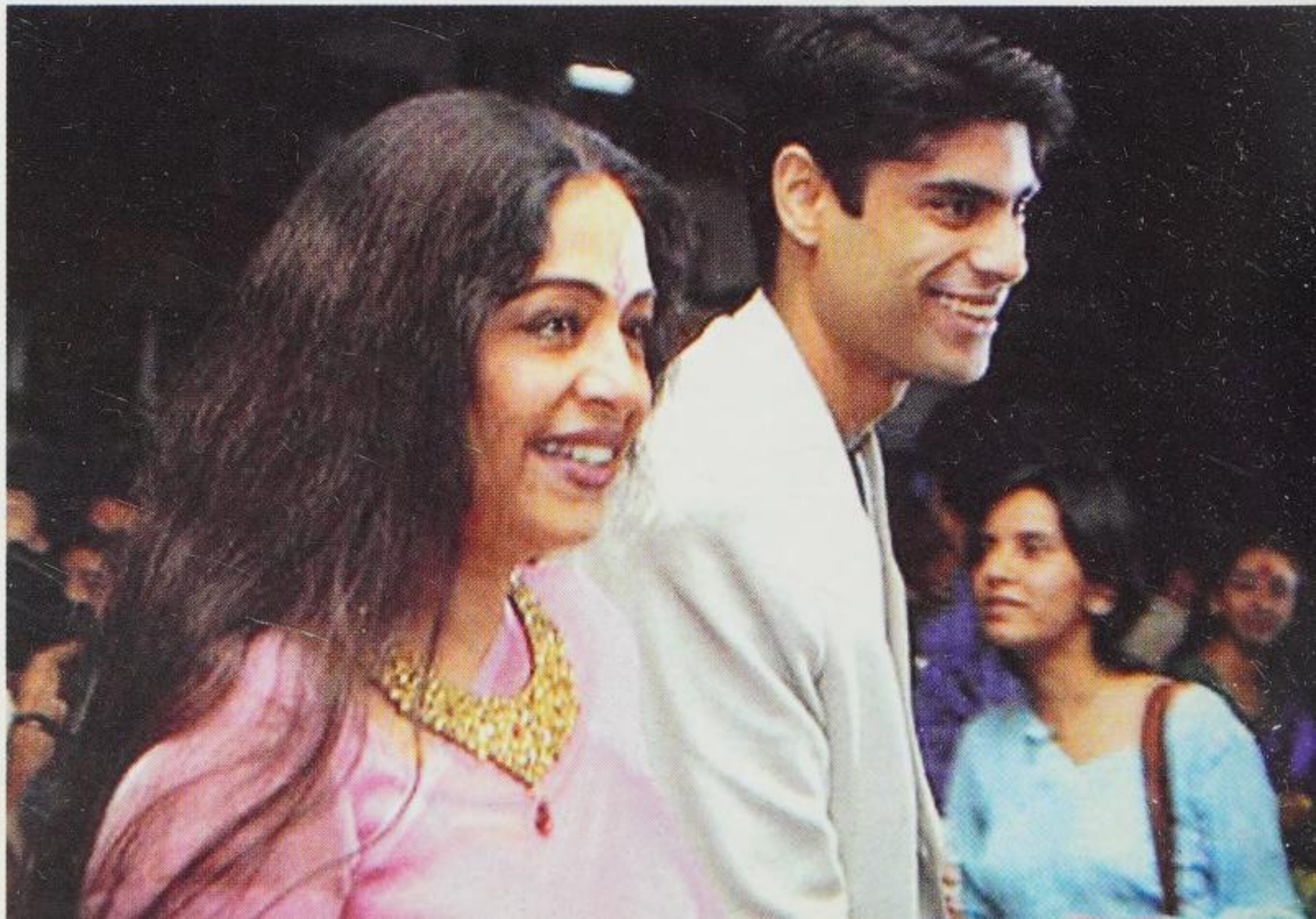


The Eternal Saga of Love : Devdas

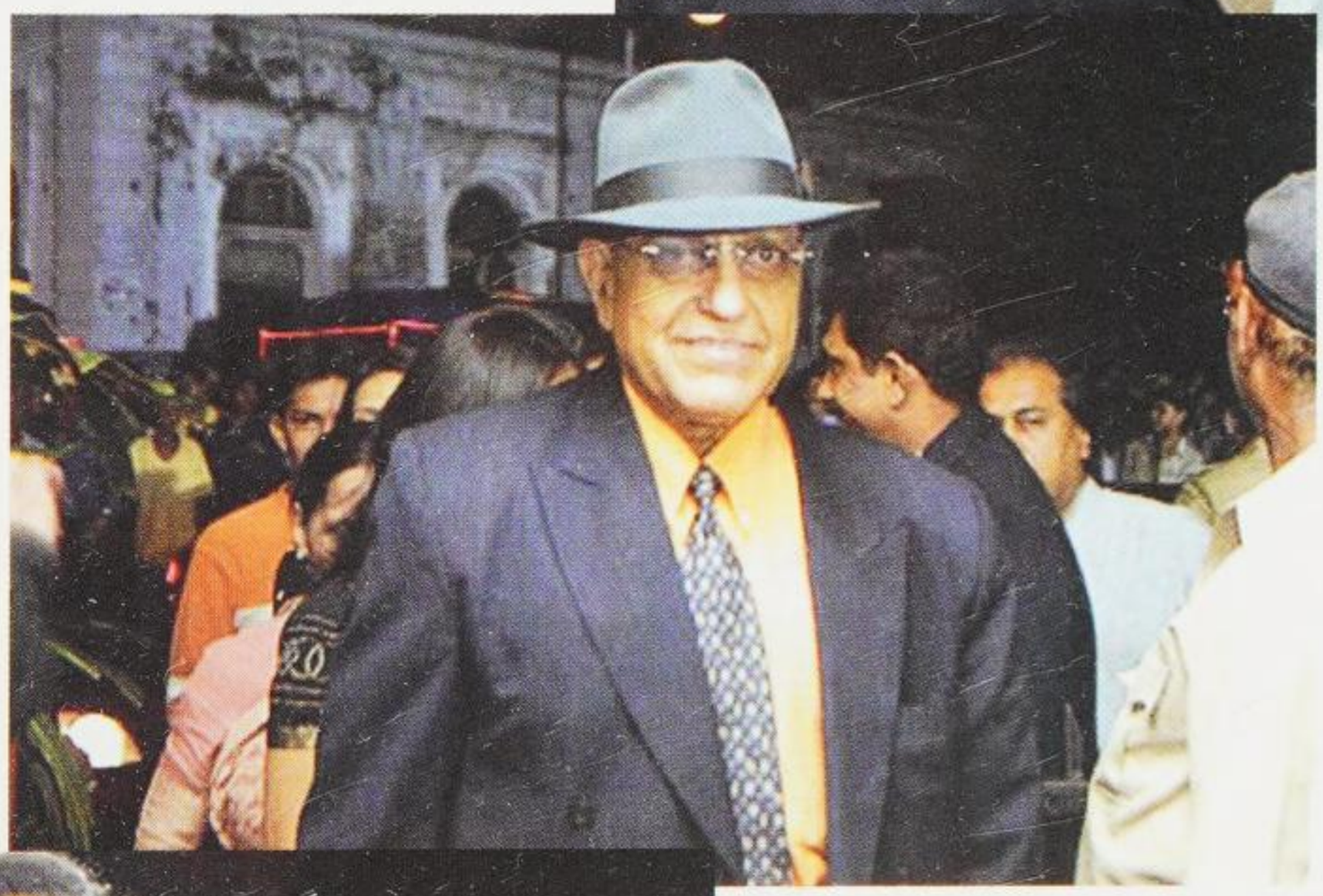


Rani Mukherjee With Birju Maharaj

Kiran Kher (Paro's Mother)



Rani Mukherjee



Amrish Puri

Simi Garewal

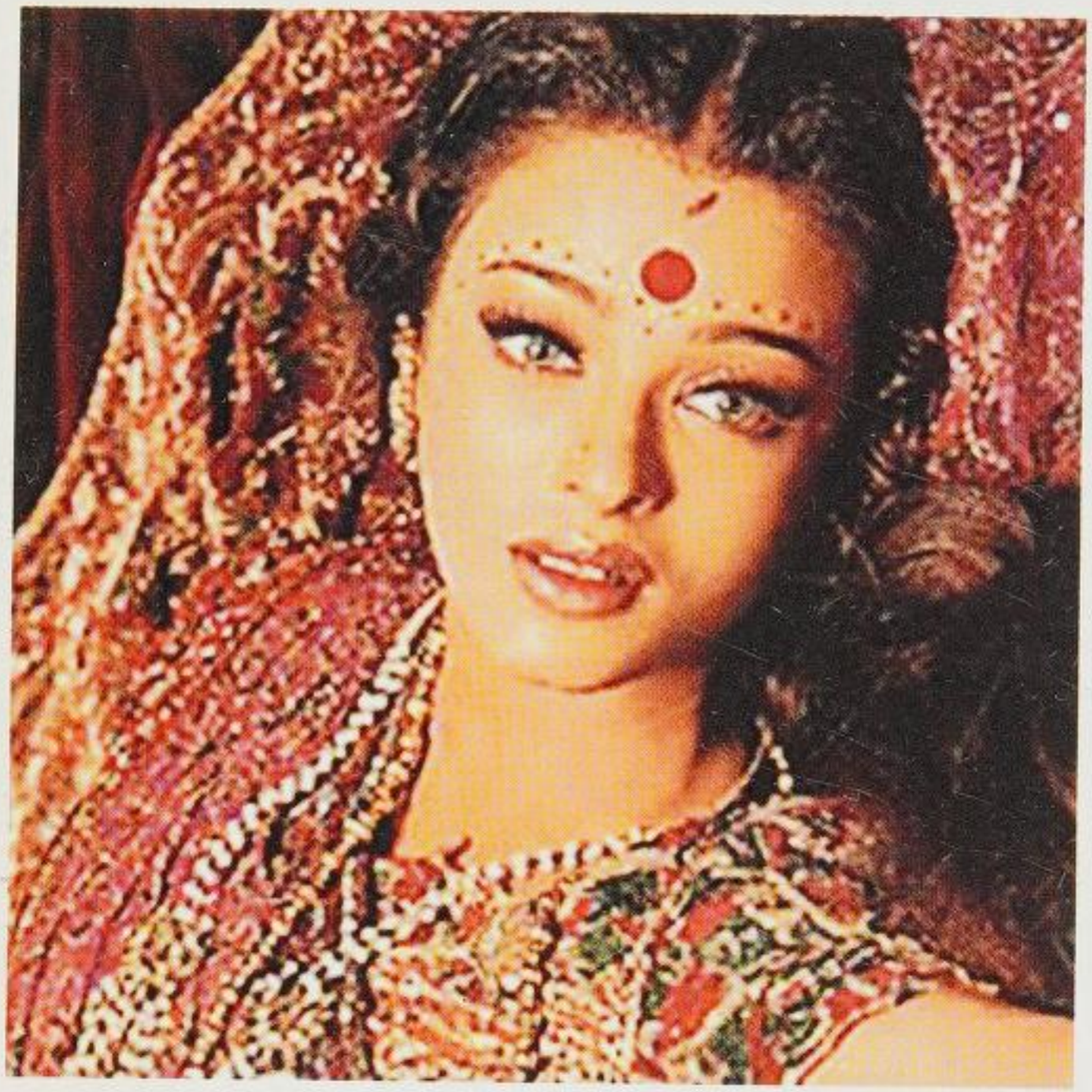
The Eternal Saga of Love : Devdas

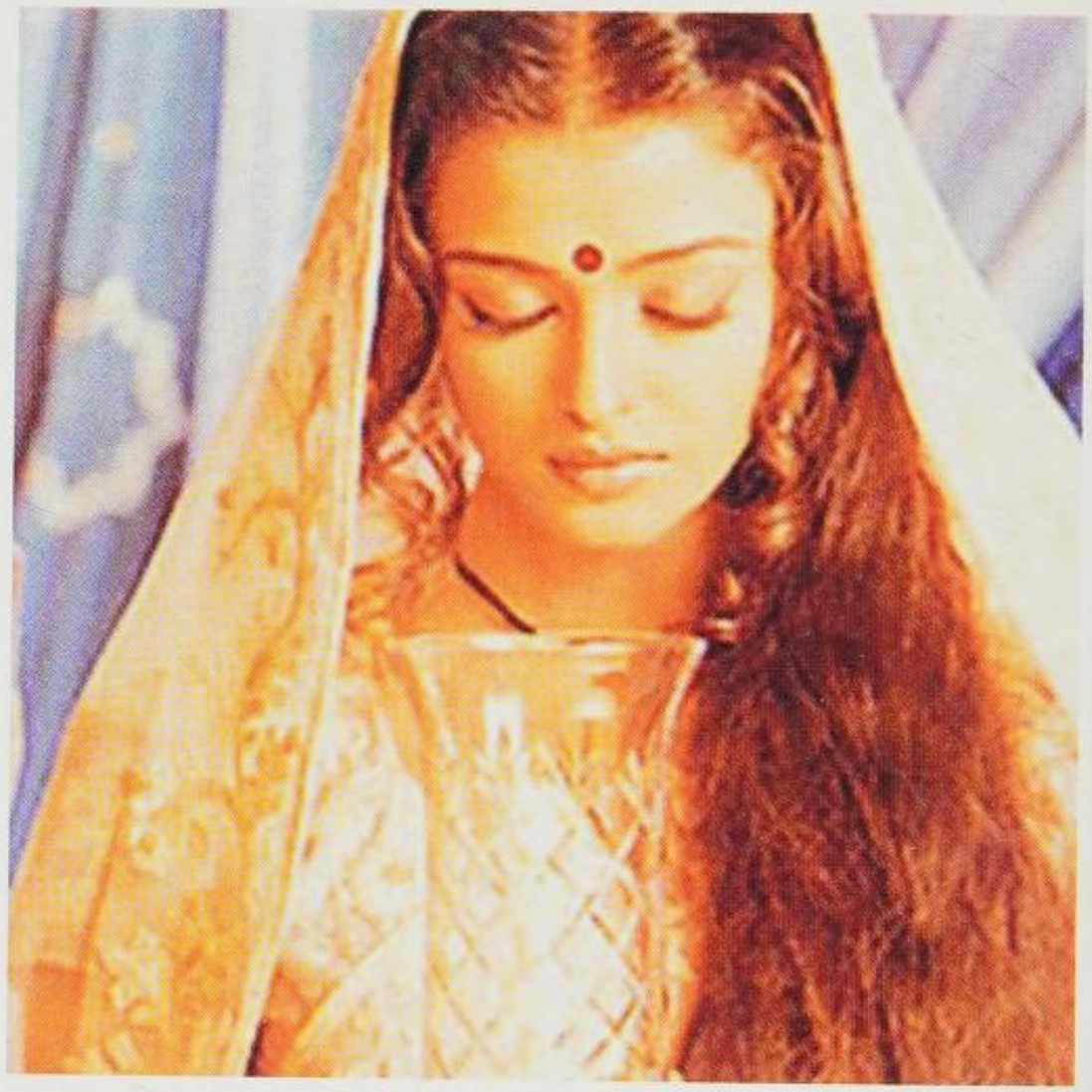
Paro & Chandramukhi
together in Devdas as well as at Premiere

An Innocent girl Paro with original Mother & Father

Prem Naam Hai Mera hann. han.. 'Prem Chopra'

The Eternal Saga of Love : Devdas



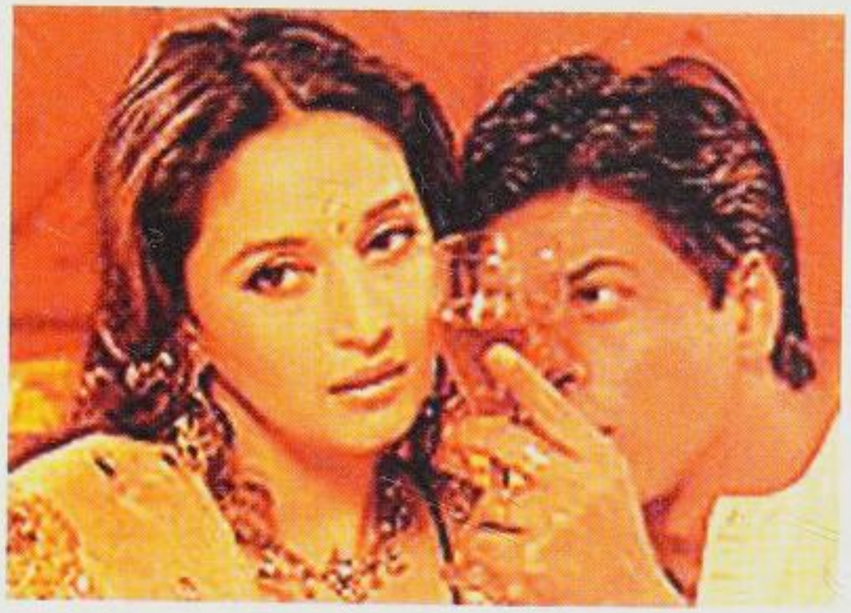


Miss World in Devdas

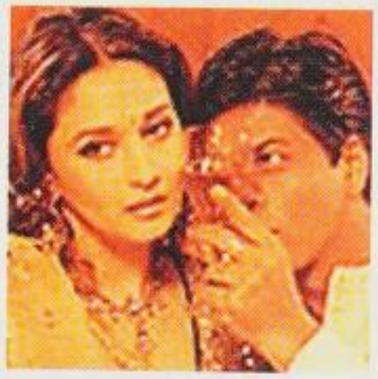
The Eternal Saga of Love : Devdas

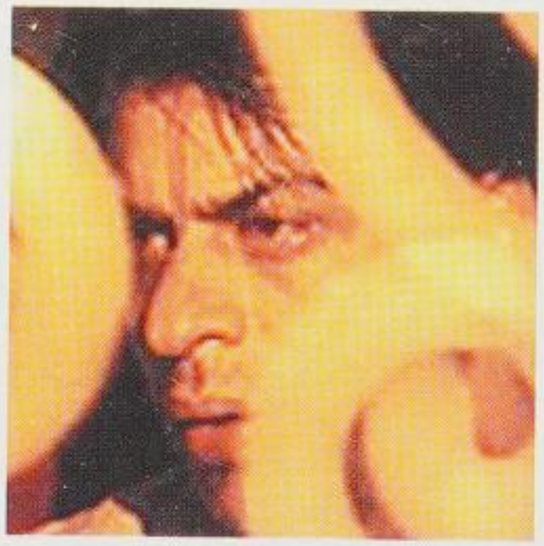
Mr. & Mrs. Nene

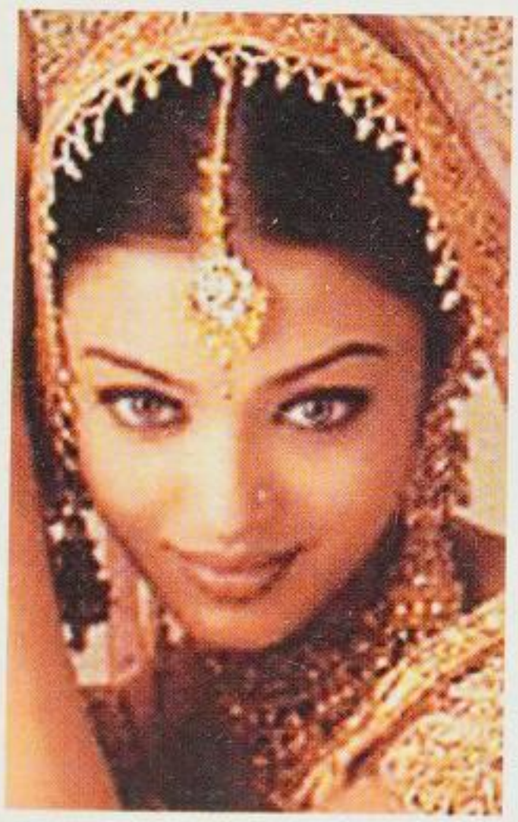
The Eternal Saga of Love : Devdas



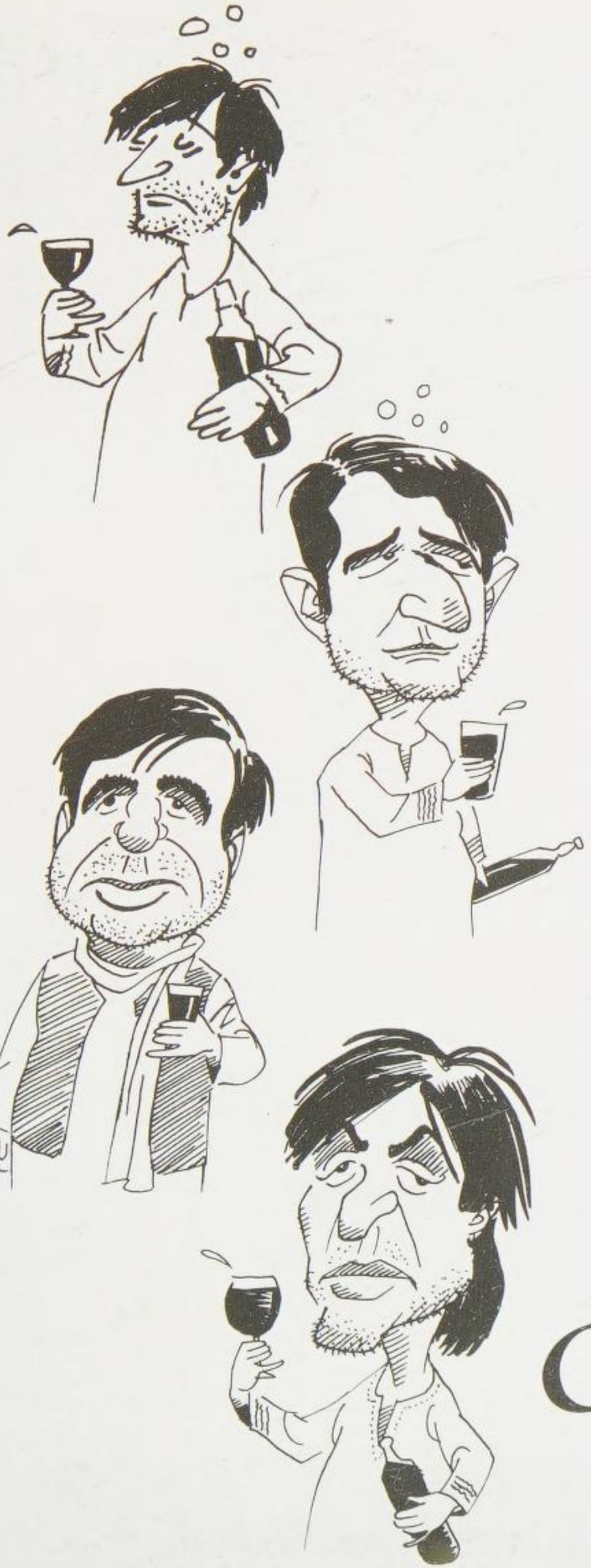
Glimpses of Devdas







The Eternal Saga of Love : Devdas

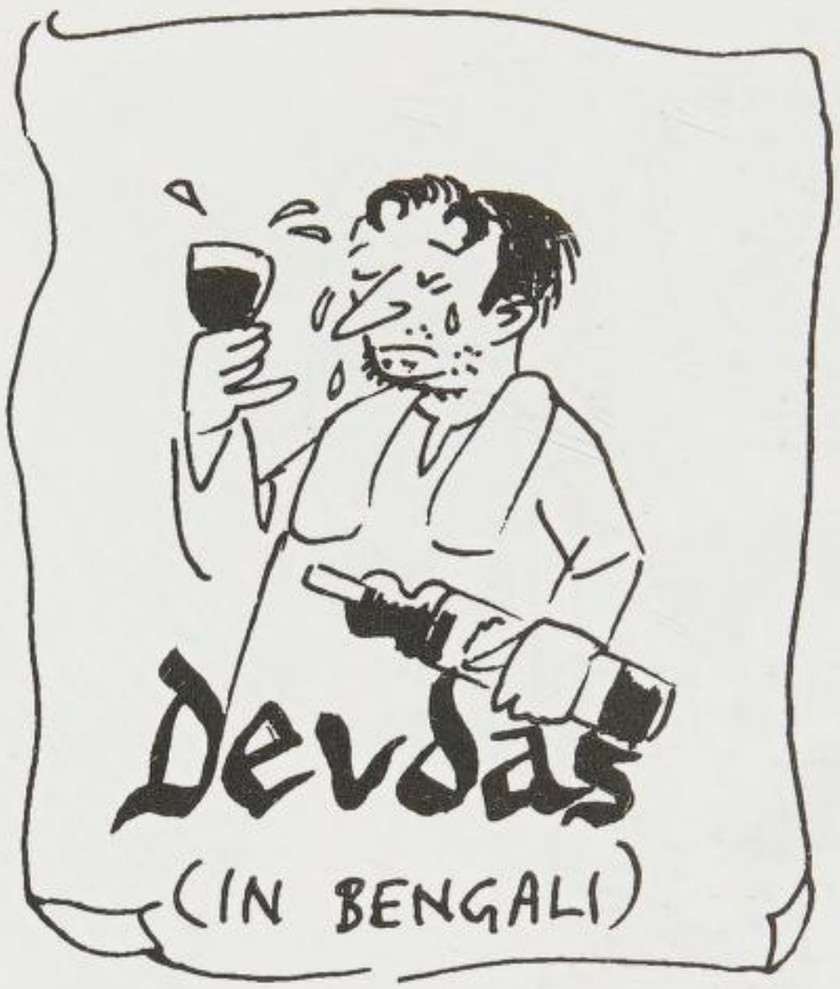


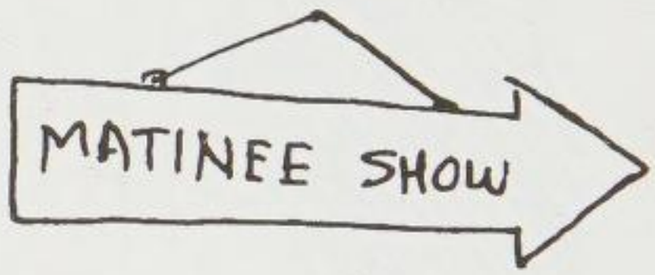
Cartoonist's Corner

The Eternal Saga of Love : Devdas

Book on Devdas by Sarat Chandra was published.

Devdas was filmed for the first time as a silent movie.

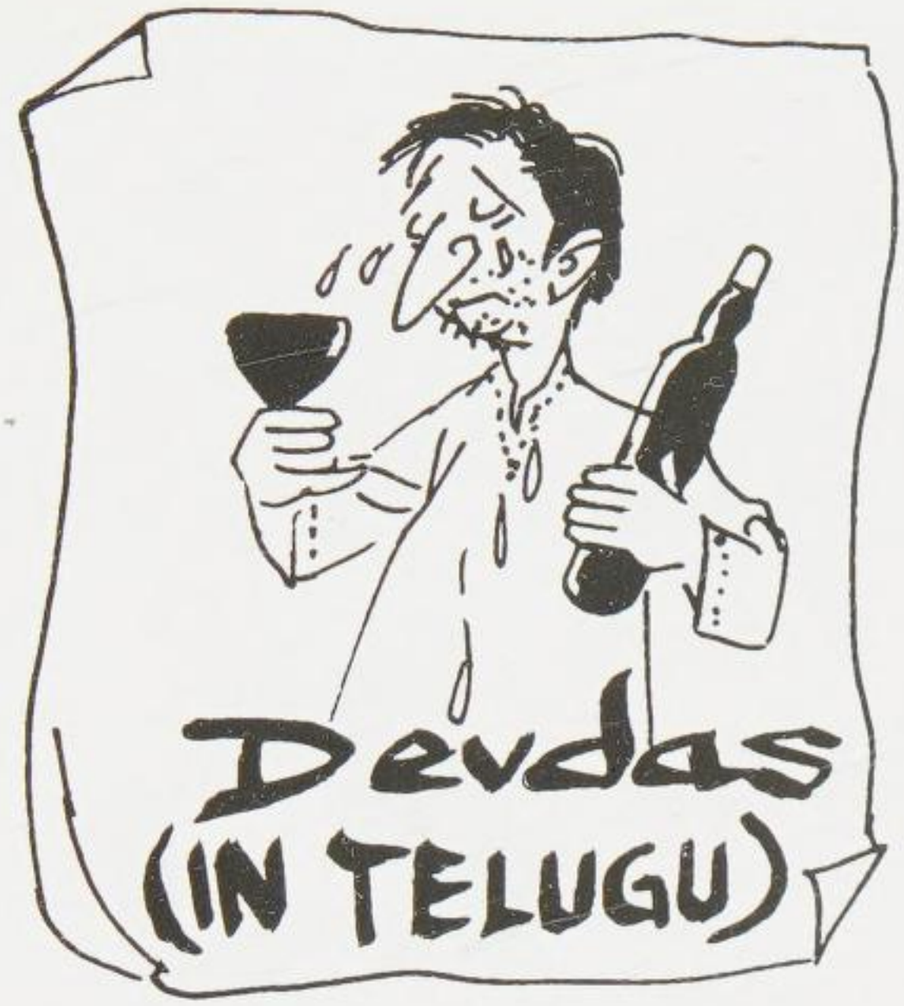




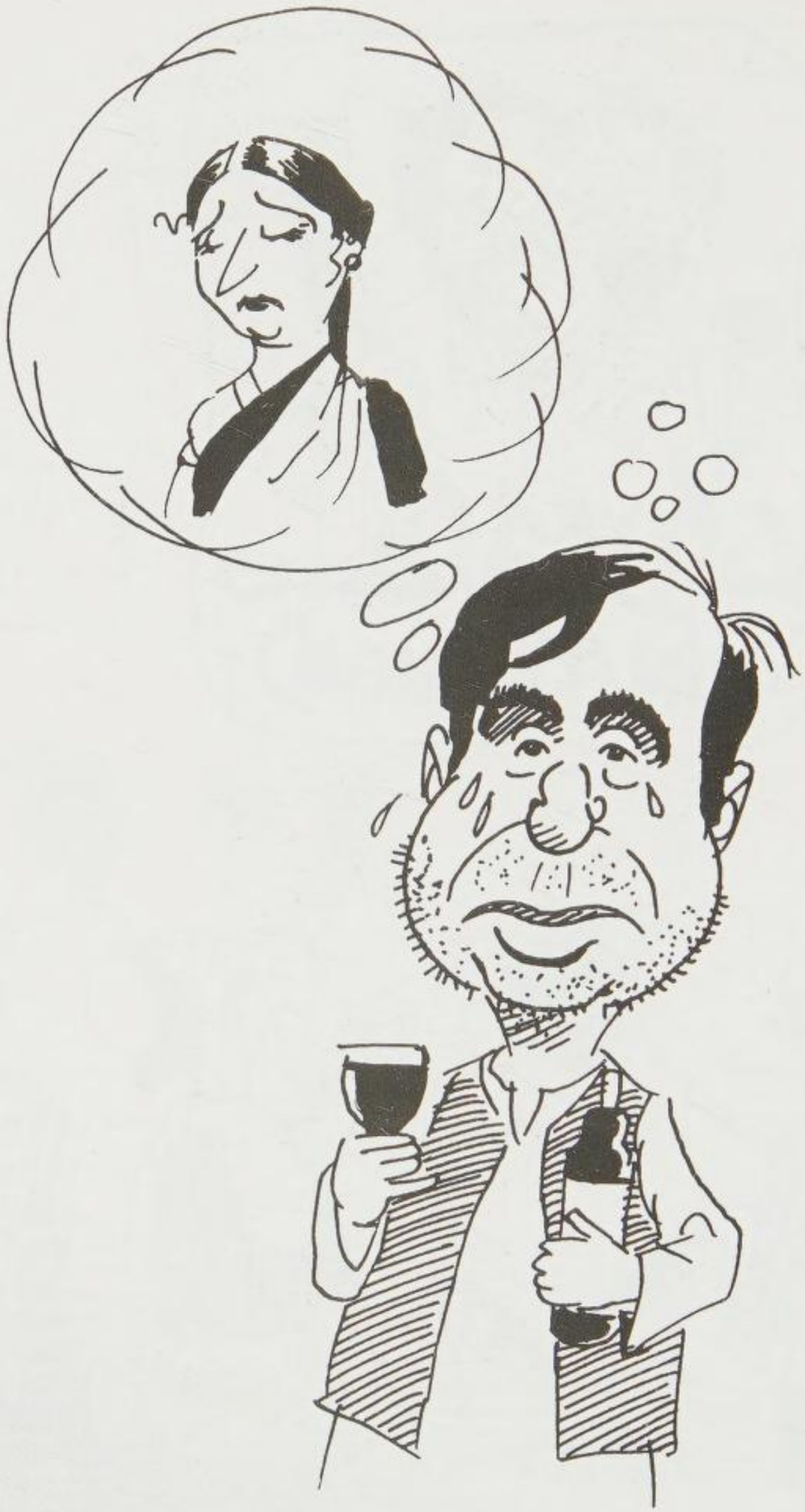
Devdas was filmed in Bengali.

In 1935, P.C. Barua made Devdas

Devdas was filmed in Tamil.



Devdas was filmed in Telegu.



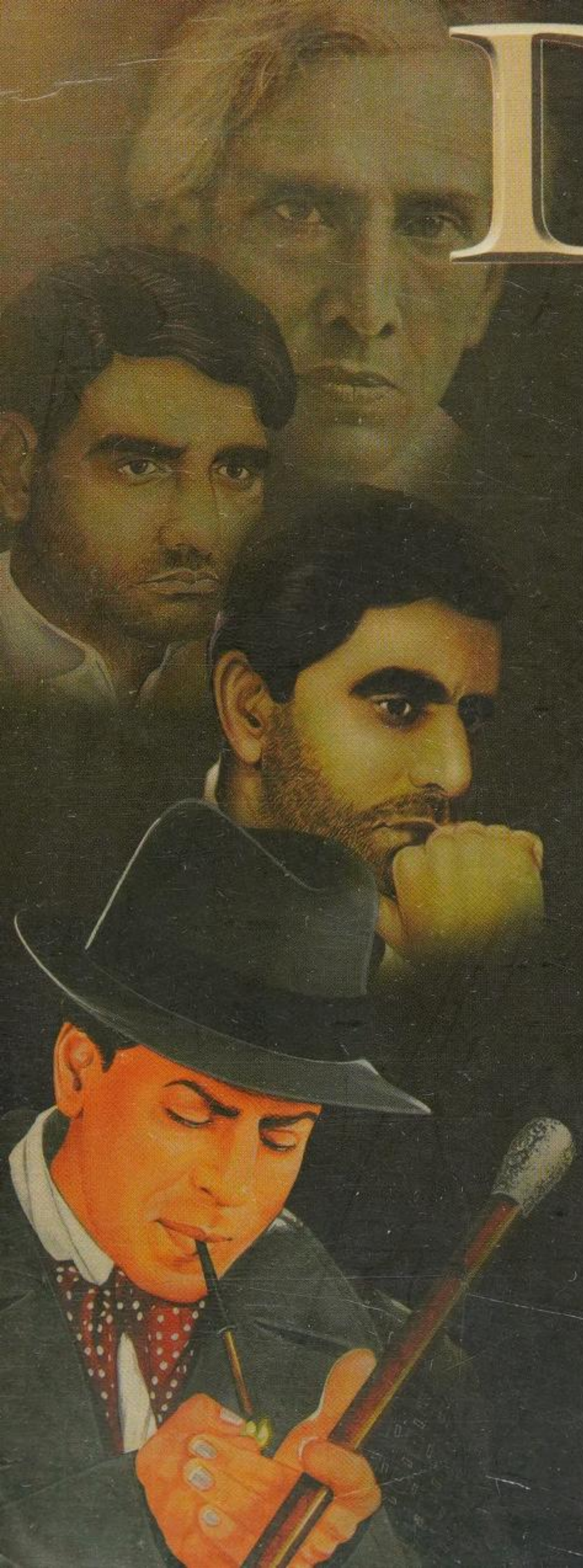
Devdas filmed in 1955 by Bimal Roy.

Devdas was made in Telegu.

Gulzar started filming Devdas but the film was not completed.

Devdas was made in Malayalam.

In 2002, Devdas was filmed again by Sanjay Leela Bhansali.



the eternal saga of love

Devdas

... tells about the tragic story of doomed love. Sarat Chandra's classic novel is retold in this book, along with the various Bollywood versions filmed on the novel.

The subtelty of K.L. Sehgal's portrayal of Devdas, Dilip Kumar's brooding melancholy to Shahrukh's overwhelming presence in the latest film on Devdas, all are dealt with in this book.

The various nuances of the two heroines of this novel, Paro and Chandramukhi, polarly different, yet bound together somewhere with a common thread of love for Devdas, are also discussed.

The various aspects of the respective film-making of the films, the passion, dedication and hard work that went into the various aspects of production, have been portrayed as well.

Colour photographs and caricatures have been added to this book to make it more interactive and illustrative.

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